



PinotFile

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*Pinot Noir is
the Tiffany of
the wine world*

Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards III

“There are special California vineyards that have proven over time to possess exceptional terroir for Pinot Noir.”

This issue is Part III or the third of a three-part article devoted to what I consider Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards.

As domestic Pinot Noir has enjoyed a surge in popularity over the past three decades and the consumer has become more knowledgeable about Pinot Noir, there has been an increasing emphasis on vineyard sources. Unlike Burgundy, where vineyards receive top billing on wine labels, in California the producer receives preeminence on wine labels.

My listing of California Pinot Noir vineyards considered “Elite” is based on twenty years of my reviews from every notable Pinot Noir vineyard in California. I have provided detailed information on each Elite California Pinot Noir vineyard. This compilation is meant to serve as a valuable resource for Pinot Noir enthusiasts as well as a reliable guide for Pinot Noir purchases.

I have chosen the word Elite to signify the finest or the best of their kind. I leave the Grand Cru designation to the French because their classification is based on primarily geological and climatic conditions while my classification is based on the quality of wines consistently originating in a special vineyard.

Outline of Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards: Part III - Central Coast

Santa Cruz Mountains

- Lester Family Vineyard
- Mount Eden Estate Vineyard
- Rhys Alpine Vineyard
- Rhys Horseshoe Vineyard
- Windy Oaks Estate Schultze Family Vineyard

Santa Lucia Highlands

- Garys' Vineyard
- Morgan Double L Vineyard

Pisoni Estate Vineyard

Tondré Grapefield

Sta. Rita Hills

Domaine De La Côte

Clos Pepe Vineyard

Fe Ciega Vineyard

Fiddlestix Vineyard

Sanford & Benedict Vineyard

Sea Smoke Vineyard

Other Central Coast appellations

Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley

Calera Jensen Vineyard, Mt. Harlan

Hoffman Mountain Ranch Vineyard, Adelaida Hills

Rosemary's Vineyard, Arroyo Grande

Solomon Hills Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley

If you stock your wine cellar with Pinot Noirs from these vineyards made by the featured producers, I guarantee you would have a wine cellar to not only brag about but one that will bring you years of marvelous drinking pleasure.

Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards

Part III: Central Coast - Santa Cruz Mountains

“Climate determines whether you can grow a grape variety successfully in a particular location, but the soil type may determine wine style and quality, given a suitable climate.”

Jamie Goode

Lester Family Vineyard

Owners: Dan and Pat Lester

Acres: 10 acres of Pinot Noir (2 acres of Syrah and Chardonnay)

Years planted: The original planting was in 1998. Additional upper vineyard planted was done in 2001.

Location: Corralitos subregion of the southern Santa Cruz Mountains on Pleasant Valley Road in Aptos. The vineyard is part of the 210-acre Deer Park Ranch owned by the Lesters since 1995.

Aspect: Nestled amongst the valley's rolling hills surrounded by towering redwoods at 450' to 600' elevation. East facing, 5-15% slope. About three miles from Monterey Bay provides cooling air and fog that moderates the vineyard weather.

Pinot Noir scions: Dijon 115, 667, Mt. Eden, Mariafeld, Swan, Wädenswil, Pommard, and DRC 122.

Soil: Nutrient poor sandy clay loam over sedimentary base rock. Rich in calcium carbonate from ancient sea beds.

Vines: 8' x 8' vine spacing

Farming: The vineyard manager is Prudy Fox who sustainably farms the vines meticulously by hand. Minimal late-season deficit irrigation (nearly dry-farmed). Herbicides have never been employed. No-till floor management. Naturally low yields of about 2 tons per acre.

Winery clients: Lester Family Wines has three bottlings - Caruso, Domingo, and Mercuria - crafted by winemakers John Benedetti and Ed Kurtzman. Pinot Noir clients have included Sante Arcangeli Family Wines, Big Basin, Alfaro Family Vineyards, La Rochelle, Soquel Vineyards, Betwixt, Thérèse Vineyards, and Waxwing Wine Cellars.

2013 Waxwing Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 123 cases, \$39. 50% whole cluster fermented, aged 11 months on once-used French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Nice perfumed scents of cherry, baking spices, sandalwood barrel cave, and worn leather. The core of cherry and dark red berry fruits are accented with some cardamom spice and a shadow of oak. A good arrow of acidity and moderate tannins lead to a moderately long, dry but juicy finish. Drink up within 5 years.* **92** (reviewed in 2015 with a score of 94)

2014 Big Basin Lester Family Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 325 cases, \$48. Clones 115, 667 and Mt. Eden. 100% whole cluster fermented. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Whole cluster-inspired aromas of dark red cherry, herbal tea and sweet pipe smoke. Nicely composed, with good harmony and a sleek, polished mouthfeel. Tannins are in check. A slight herbaceous tone reflects the whole cluster input.* **93** (I was enamored with this wine when review in 2017 and gave it a score of 97)

2016 Big Basin Lester Family Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., 414 cases, \$55. Clone 667 and a Swan selection. Aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. 100% whole cluster fermented. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Whole cluster driven aromas of burnt tobacco, spice and purple fruits. Simply a great whole cluster fermented wine with purple berry and purple plum fruits that make a big impact on the palate and finish. Slightly smoky, with a grilled meat note. Noticeable, but not intrusive tannins and a delightful, sweet cherry finish. Still a youngster and surely a 15-year wine.* **94** (Reviewed in 2018 with the same score)

2017 Waxwing Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 115 cases, \$48. 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in once-used French oak barrels and bottled with light filtration. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Vibrant aromas of Bing cherry and allspice. Mid-weight plus in style, with a well-ripened array of fruits including purple grape, boysenberry and blackberry flavors with a hint of savory herbs in the background. No hard edges, with modest tannins and a lengthy, crisp, and quenching finish.* **93**

2018 Lester Domingo Lester Family Vineyards Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 260 cases, \$55. Clones 667, 115, Mt. Eden, Wädenswil 2A, and Swan. Harvest Brix 23.8°. Native yeast fermentation. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Light garnet color in the glass. Wonderful nose with effusive aromas of cherry, blueberry, spice, and pipe smoke. Light to mid-weight in heft, with a delicious core of well-spiced cherry goodness. Forward drinking with svelte tannins, a lacy texture and a welcome hint of oak. This wine has the delicate power that is so desirable in a great Pinot Noir.* **94**

2018 Lester Mercurio Lester Family Vineyards Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 267 cases, \$55. Clones 667, 115, Pommard, Mt. Eden, Wädenswil 2A, and Swan. Harvest Brix 23.2°-24.2°. 95% de-stemmed, native yeast and inoculated yeast fermentations. Aged 10 months on the lees in French oak barrels, 30% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Deep cherry aroma with added scents of earthy flora, and floral bouquet. Dark cherry and purple grape fruits are assembled in a very approachable style with excellent balance. This offering has more earthiness and savory oak than the Domingo bottling but is nearly equal in desirability. The extended finish is particularly noteworthy.* **93**

2018 Waxwing Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 133 cases, \$42. Seventh vintage of this wine. Clones 115, 667 and Mt. Eden. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak, and aged in once-used French oak barrels for 10 months. Bottled with light filtration. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Terrific nose infused with aromas of cherry, strawberry, red rose bud, sandalwood, and savory herbs. Light to mid-weight stylistically, with a blast of cherry and strawberry fruit that attacks the palate on entry and is expansive through the mid-palate. Very appealing elegance with gentle tannins, a hint of complimentary oak, and a long, juicy, lifted finish. Impressive harmony. Still exceptional when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. A very special value.* **94**



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/831/.

Mount Eden Estate Vineyard

Owners: Jeffrey Patterson (the winemaker since 1981) and spouse Ellie acquired majority ownership in 2008.

Acres: 40 (7 acres of Pinot Noir, 20 acres of Chardonnay, and 13 acres of Bordeaux varieties)

Years planted: Martin Ray planted his vineyards in 1945 and launched his innovative namesake winery, Martin Ray Winery in the early 1950s. The vineyard was replanted stepwise beginning in 1984 with 20% of the vines propagated from the original budwood. One acre of the original vines was kept as a "mother vineyard." Replanting allowed newer methods of trellising, closer vine spacing, and better canopy management, all dramatically increasing yields. Replanting concluded in the early 2000s.

Location: 30 miles south of San Francisco in Saratoga. Mount Eden Estate Vineyard is reached by a 2.2-mile winding dirt road.

Aspect: An exposed hilltop viticultural island perched at 2,000 feet above sea level overlooking Silicon Valley. Since the vineyard is high in the Santa Cruz Mountains and close to the ocean (15 miles) and San Francisco Bay, the days are long and fog-free with low daytime highs and a relative absence of heat spikes in the summer and fall. Most of the vineyard acreage is on eastern slopes which promotes slow, measured ripening.

Pinot Noir scions: Massale selections (historic vine plantings), Mt. Eden clone (UCD37), Winery Lake, Swan, Calera, and Dijon 115, 667, 777, and faux 828.

Soil: Infertile Franciscan shale

Vines: VSP trellising

Farming: Owner, winemaker, and conscientious steward Jeffrey Patterson directs all farming. Dry farmed. Crop thinning when necessary to ensure yields do not exceed 2 tons per acre.

Winery clients: None, a monopole

Comments: Mount Eden's lineage of estate bottled Pinot Noir and Chardonnay is the longest in California. One of the first "boutique" California wineries. The winery's flagship estate bottling is a mosaic of all the planted clones. The site is truly unique in that Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Cabernet Sauvignon exist in harmony. Merry Edwards was the winemaker at Mount Eden from 1974 to 1976, and sent cuttings of a single Mount Eden vine to UC Davis FPS where it was registered as UCD 37 in 1977. The Pattersons created a special 2017 Tanaka Project Pinot Noir to honor a longtime friend of the winery, Ron Tanaka, who sadly committed suicide. This wine was meant to drive conversations about mental health and suicide prevention. The Pinot Noir vineyard at Mount Eden was renamed 'Tanaka.' This vineyard site has a sense of terroir that is distinct from the other estate Pinot Noir plantings. This is the first single-vineyard Pinot Noir ever released by Mount Eden (75 cases, \$80).

2014 Mount Eden Vineyards Estate Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 800 cases, \$65. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Plenty of new-sawn oak on the nose along with aromas of boysenberry and root beer. A mid-weight plus styled wine with a plethora of well-ripened purple and black berry fruits with a hint of raisin and savory, toasted herbs. A gutsy wine but refined, with a welcoming suave texture and commendable balance. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. 93*

2017 Mount Eden Vineyards Estate Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.9% alc., 208 cases, \$65. Made with organic grapes. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Reserved aromas of blackberry jam on a toasted muffin. Full-bodied and very ripe-fruited, offering well-oaked fruit flavors of blackberry and cassis. A huge, dense Cabernet lovers Pinot Noir. A slight sense of alcohol shows up on the finish as the wine warms in the glass. Unchanged when sampled the following day from a previously opened bottle. 90*

2017 Mount Eden Vineyards The Tanaka Project Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 75 cases, \$80. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. An extraordinary wine in all respects. Soaring aromas of the blackest fruits, anise, and oak-driven spice and mocha. Glorious purple grape and purple plum flavors exhibit a striking entry, mid-palate and finish. Very modest tannins, with exquisite harmony. An extremely long finish just doesn't want to give up. Terrific the next day and 3 days later from a previously opened bottle still showing an amazingly long finish and impeccable balance. 97*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/654/.

Rhys Alpine Vineyard

Owner: Kevin Harvey

Acres: 13 acres total, 10.5 acres of Pinot Noir and 2.5 acres of Chardonnay

Years planted: 2001-2003

Location: Northwestern edge of the Santa Cruz Mountains and 3.5 miles west of Skyline Blvd (Highway 35).

Aspect: Steep, southwest, ocean-facing vineyard that is 8 miles inland from the Pacific ocean at 1,200-1,500 feet elevation. Slopes can range up to 40%.

Pinot Noir scions: Rhys massale selection (multiple suitcase selections and heritage clones) and Swan selection.

Soil: Purisma formation, a 4million-year-old Pliocene shale. The depth of the soil is 6 -20". The land has never been forested.

Vines: Spacing is 6' x 4', with VSP trellising., Rootstocks include 420A, 101-14 and 3309.

Farming: Organic with minimal input

Winery clients: None, a monopole

Comments: A separate bottling is offered from the Swan Terrace portion of the Alpine Vineyard (Photo below). This 1.5-acre terrace is located on a steep, east-facing parcel planted with a number of different Swan selections. This part of the vineyard is bottled separately due to its distinctiveness. The cost of developing this vineyard has been extraordinary but the low-yielding vines have delivered exceptional wines. Rhys bottled a separate Hillside Pinot Noir from Alpine Vineyard in the 2018 vintage because of its "terrific concentration, poise, and energy." this wine was awarded a perfect 100-point score by Jeb Dunnick. He said, "One of the greatest Pinot Noirs from California I've ever tasted."

2006 Rhys Alpine Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., magnum. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The aromas reach a pinnacle over a hour in the glass, revealing a nose replete with dark berries, dark rose petal and a hint of oak. Very lovely blackberry, boysenberry and black raspberry fruit flavors backed by noticeable but refined tannins. Fruit-laden and reflective of the exuberance of young vines. The finishing length deserves special mention. In this magnum format, the wine surely will provide pleasure for several more years.* **94**

2012 Rhys Alpine Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 12.9% alc., magnum. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Intriguing aromas of black cherry, baking spices, tobacco, rose petal and Chanel #5. Over time, my enthusiasm for the nose reached a seductive stage and my notes say, "Great.!" Packed with chewy black fruits but very polished and silky in texture. Nothing out of place with complete integration of tannins. The generously- fruited finish easily last 30 seconds. This PrimaDonna is easily a 20-year wine.* **97**



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/503/.

Rhys Horseshoe Vineyard

Owner: Kevin Harvey

Acres: 20.8 acres total, 10.85 acres of Pinot Noir

Years planted:

2004 - initial plantings

2013-2016 - 2 acres of high density (2' x 3') own-rooted Pinot Noir

2014 - 3.5 acres of high density (2' x 3') selection massale located on the vineyard's rocky eastern slope.

Over time, the best performing selections have been culled and the poorer performing selections grafted over in a process of massale selection. Some Swan selection has also been added.

Location: Northwestern edge of the Santa Cruz Mountains west of Skyline Blvd (Highway 35), and less than ½ mile from Alpine Vineyard.

Aspect: Southwest to southeast, 10 miles inland from the Pacific Coast at 1,360'-1610' elevation. 10-25% slope.

Pinot Noir scions: Rhys massale selections and Swan clone/selections

Soil: Extremely rocky topsoil (6"-20" deep) over Monterey diatomaceous shale and interbedded limestone. 11-14 million years old (nearly 10 million years older than Alpine vineyard).

Vines: Spacing is 4' x 6' and 2' x 3', VSP trellising. Rootstocks include 420A, 101-14, 3309, and own-rooted.

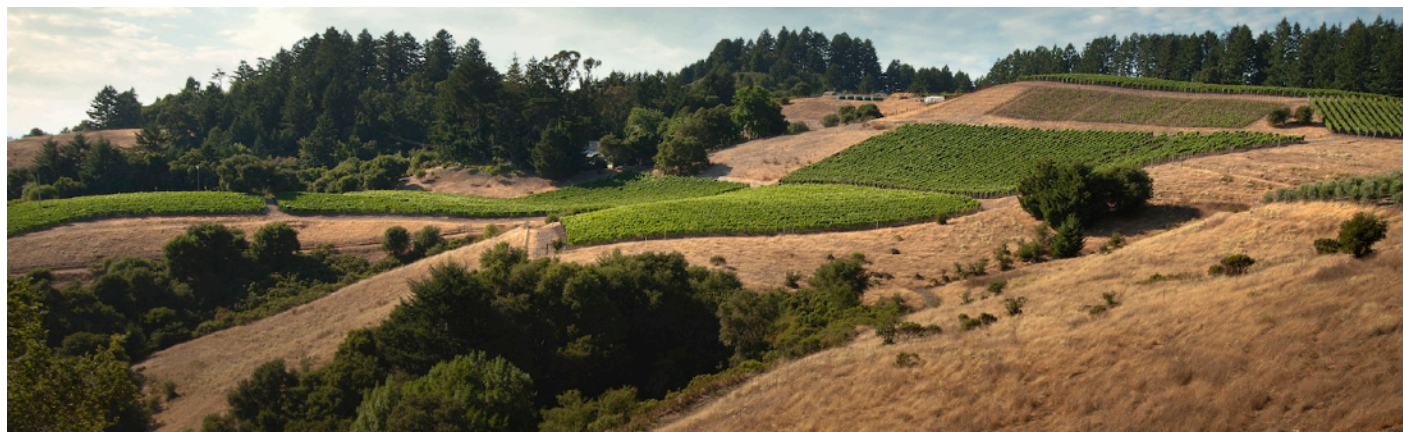
Farming: Organic with minimal input

Winery clients: None, a monopole

Comments: The newer Dijon clones have largely shunned. The Calera clone did not perform at this site. In the 2018 vintage, a special Horseshoe Hillside Pinot Noir bottling was released. The wine was awarded a 99 point score by Jeb Dunnick who described it as a “singular, gorgeously complete Pinot Noir.”

2014 Rhys Horseshoe Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 12.7% alc. Rhys selection and two heritage clones. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose is both fresh and uplifting and both fruity and savory with scents of purple berry, earthy flora and iron. Discreetly concentrated in a middleweight style with flavors of black raspberry and blueberry-pomegranate framed by a moderately firm tannic backbone. There is a distinct savory, earthy tone. Beautifully crafted, with a bright mouthfeel and some finishing length. Even more enjoyable when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. 93*

2018 Rhys Horseshoe Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., \$. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Intriguing aromas of black raspberry, blackberry, fresh-turned soil, and a hint of dark caramel. The purple grape, black raspberry and blackberry fruits have a striking presence in a middleweight style. The earthy underbelly adds a terroir note and it seems as if one can taste the soil where the vine grew. Silken in texture, with modest and balanced tannins and impressive ending fortitude. Approachable now but will be a long-term wine as indicated by its persistent excellence when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. 95*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/41/.

Windy Oaks Estate Schultze Family Vineyard

Owners: Jim and Judy Schultze

Acres: 14.5 acres of Pinot Noir

Years planted:

1996 - 3 acres of Pinot Noir, Henry's Block and Bay Block

1997 - 9 acres of Pinot Noir - Oaks, Medic, Lower, Bobcat, J&E, and Judy's Blocks

1999 - 0.5 acres of Pinot Noir - RC Block

2004 - 0.5 acres of Pinot Noir - Clos Bella Block

Location: Southern end of the Santa Cruz Mountains in Corralitos

Aspect: 7.9 miles inland from the deep-water canyons of Monterey Bay at 820'-945' elevation. The close proximity to Monterey Bay and the elevation of the vineyard combine to create an extremely long growing season.

Pinot Noir scions: Wädenswil 2A, Dijon 115, 667, 777, and faux 828, 96 (Chambertin), 122 Vosne-Romanée, suitcase SBC Vosne-Romanée and suitcase SBC virus-free Vosne-Romanée.

Soil: Fairly uniform clay, silt and loam, 18"-48" deep over brown and black fractured shale.

Vines: VSP trellis system modified with spreaders to split the canopy at its top. Vine spacing is 5' x 8' except in the original 3 acres that are 5' x 10'. Northeast by southwest row orientation except Henry's Block and Clos Belle which are northwest by southeast.

Farming: Fully sustainable and organic where possible. Dry farmed most years. Hot air “sprays” are used to substantially reduce the need for fungicide sprays and also kills insect pests like mites. A newer block of the vineyard treated with hot air is a trial block and the first Pinot Noir will be released soon from this

block. As far as Jim knows, this will be the first Pinot Noir made from grapes that have never been sprayed. The vines are not hedged, but rather growing shoots are wrapped around one of the split top wires to open up the canopy and increase airflow (Mme Lalou Bize at Domaine Leroy uses this same technique since she believes that if you cut a growing shoot, a hormonal reaction occurs in the vine that affects the grape flavor profile and causes side shoots). The jury is still out on the flavor profile according to Jim, but his early results have been promising. A permanent cover crop with the use of crawler tractors protects against soil compaction. Leaf pulling is only performed inside the canopy to help protect against sunburn.

Winery clients: None, a monopole

Comments: Windy Oaks Estates Vineyards & Winery was my 2018 Winery of the Year. I believe there is 1 acre of Chardonnay planted.

2008 Windy Oaks Estate Limited Release 100% Whole Cluster Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.9% alc. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Well-appointed aromas of dark cherry, burnt tobacco, toasted marshmallow with hints of toasty oak and medicine cabinet. Velvety on the palate and blessed with a discreet array of flavors including dark cherry, cola, black tea and dry-aged steak. Spirited upon opening but fades in appeal over time. A fine aged Pinot Noir that has seen better days.* **91**

2018 Windy Oaks Estate Proprietor's Reserve Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., \$65 (sold out). The winery's signature wine, primarily sourced from the original 3-acre vineyard. Unfined and unfiltered. *Light garnet color in the glass. Very seductive aromas of cherry, spice, wilted rose and graham that build in intensity over time in the glass. Light to mid-weight in concentration, featuring flavors of cherry, raspberry, baking spices and vanilla. Packs more flavor than one would expect with the light color. Minimal tannins, good crispness and a modicum of oak.* **93**

2018 Windy Oaks Estate Limited Release Wood Tank Fermented Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., \$N/A. Fermented in 1-ton, French oak, open-top fermentation tank. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose leads with scents of darker cherry, ripe strawberry and tilled earth. Mid-weight plus in style and somewhat bombastic, with flavors of black cherry and black raspberry. More fruit and structure than the Proprietor's Reserve with another layer of flavor intensity that is expansive in the mouth and on the finish.* **94**

2018 Windy Oaks Estate Special Release Judy's Block Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir 13.7% alc., 23 cases, \$110. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose speaks primarily of earthy flora. Very ripe-fruited in a mid-weight style with flavors of black currant, prune and Nutella. Soft in the mouth with gentle tannins. The deluge of ripe fruit lessens the charm of Pinot Noir for me, but the wine will find attractors.* **90**



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/170/. Practically every Pinot Noir from vintages 2004-2016 has been reviewed.

Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards

Part III: Central Coast - Santa Lucia Highlands

Garys' Vineyard

Owners: Gary Francioni and Gary Pisoni (thus the name of the vineyard is Garys')

Acres: 50 - 46 acres of Pinot Noir and 4 acres of Syrah

Year planted: 1997

Location: The site is in the heart of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA, 1.5 miles south of Rosella's Vineyard and 7+ miles north of the Pisoni Vineyard in a slightly cooler area.

Aspect: Cool, maritime climate with morning fog and strong afternoon coastal winds

Pinot Noir scions: Primarily Pisoni scion supplemented with Calera and Mt. Eden clones, and clone 23.

Soil: Arroyo Seco sandy loam

Vines: 5' x 8' and 6' x 8' spacing on VSP bilateral trellising with 1,089 to 908 vines per acre

Farming: Managed by Gary Francioni and Gary and Mark Pisoni. Yields are kept low by careful hand-farming that includes shoot thinning, leaf removal, fruit dropping, and harvesting.

Winery clients: Lucia is the primary client (Lucia is a Pisoni family winery) along with ROAR (Gary Francioni's label). Other clients have included Alfaro Family Vineyards & Winery, A.P. Vin, Bernardus Vineyards & Winery, Calera Wine Co., Capioux Cellars, Clarice, Copain, DAOU, Kosta Browne, La Rochelle, Loring Wine Co., Martin Alfaro, Miner Family Vineyards, Morgan Winery, Miura, Siduri, Surh-Luchtel, Tantara, Testarossa, Truckee River, Twomey, Vision Cellars, and Waltzing Bear Cellars.

Comments: This vineyard symbolizes generations of friendship between the Francioni and Pisoni families. The two Garys have known each other their entire lives.

2017 Morgan Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., 80 cases, \$65. 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in 57% new French oak barrels. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Hold on to your hats when you pop the cork on this one! Engaging aromas of dark red berry and cherry and spice. The dark red and purple berry fruits really grab your attention on entry, showing the extra class that is typical of this vineyard. Very seductive, with a silken mouthfeel, masterful oak management, and plenty of juicy vitality. The ridiculously long finish stands out among the 2017 Morgan Pinot Noirs sampled on this day. A joyous wine to drink the following day as well from a previously opened bottle. It is wines like this that made me fall in love with Pinot Noir in the first place. A. Reviewed July 20, 2019. 96*

2017 Clarice Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$80, screw cap. This project from winemaker Adam Lee is named after his teetotaling grandmother Clarice. 54% whole cluster fermented. Aged in 66.6% new French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Enticing aromas of dark cherry and spice box. A tad richer and more structured than the Rosella's bottling. Exquisitely composed with a wide range of dark fruit flavors and a touch of spice. There is a good acidic vibe and the finish is amazingly long. When tasted from a previously opened bottle after 4 days, the wine was still superb but will be even more rewarding in a few years. Reviewed June 18, 2019. 96*

2018 Clarice Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.08% alc., \$85, screw cap. 76.2% whole cluster fermented. Aged in 72.7% French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Deep, dark and mysterious aromas of black fruits with an earthy tone. A little more concentrations and structure than the Rosella's and not as welcoming at this stage. Still, the flamboyant fruit has charm, the suede tannins add textural seduction and the finish goes on and on and on. Still stellar when tasted from a previously opened bottle five days after opening. Cellaring will be beneficial, but this will always be the baddest boy in the three 2018 Clarice Pinot Noir lineup. Reviewed June 18, 2019. 95*

2018 Morgan Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 98 cases, \$65. 100% de-stemmed, native yeast fermentation, aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Enticing and penetrating aromas of dark cherry, pomegranate, sandalwood and savory spices. Mid weight plus in heft, with highly flavorful black cherry, black raspberry and molasses flavors. Nicely balanced with integrated tannins and*

an extended finish. The most powerfully flavored of the 2018 Morgan Pinot Noirs tasted. Reviewed October 4, 2020. 93

2019 Testarossa Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 600 cases, \$76. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 57% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Nicely composed perfume with scents of cherry, red grape, red rose petal and peppery herbs. Light to mid-weight in style with a glorious charge of vivid, spicy black cherry fruit. Amazingly long in the mouth and on the generous finish. Very polished with enviable harmony. At this stage, the palate far exceeds the nose in allure. Reviewed June 13, 2021. 93*

2019 Lucia Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Reserved, but pleasant aromas of blackberry and spiced black cherry. Full-bodied in style with a plethora of dark red, purple and black fruits. Excellent fruit purity, charming and seamless with a polished finish of some length. A healthy backbone of tannin corrals the rich fruit. 93*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/201/.

Morgan Double L Vineyard

Owners: Daniel and Donna Morgan

Acres: 48.52 acres on a 65-acre property: 27.99 acres of Pinot Noir, 18.45 acres of Chardonnay, 1.06 acres of Syrah and 1.02 acres of Riesling.

Years planted: 1997, 1998, and selective replants in 2014

Location: Northern end of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA neighboring Sleepy Hollow, Rosella's and Garys'

vineyards.

Aspect: Southeast-facing exposition with slopes from 150' to 550' elevations. The warm air in the southern end of the Salinas Valley draws in cool breezes from Monterey Bay in the afternoons. Strong winds keep temperatures down and thicken grape skins. Slow, gentle ripening lasts four to five weeks longer than most other regions in California extending harvest into the fall.

Pinot Noir scions: Pommard 5, Dijon 114, 115, 667, 777, and a "La Tache" suitcase selection

Soils: Arroyo Seco gravelly loam and Chualar clay loam

Vines: 5' x 6' spacing, bilateral cordon. Rootstocks are 101-14, 3309, Riparia Gloire, and SO4.

Farming: Sustainably farmed. Organically certified in 2001, becoming the first and only Monterey County Certified Organic property in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Four times a year compost tea is applied through the drip lines in the vineyard to provide micronutrients and microbes for the soil. A cover crop protects against runoff and maximizes water saturation. Average yield is 3 tons per acre.

Winery clients: None, a monopole

Comments: The vineyard name, "Double L," is in honor of the Morgan's twin daughters and stands for "Double Luck."

2017 Morgan Double L Vineyard Clone RC Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 100 cases, \$65. Cuttings from a famous vineyard in Burgundy were grafted onto a small block of vines at the top of the estate Double L Vineyard. These organic grapes were 100% de-stemmed. Native yeast fermentation and aging for 11 months in French oak barrels, 45% new. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Bright aromas of cherry, spice and sous-bois. Light to mid weight in concentration and elegant in style, with flavors of red cherry, raspberry and cranberry with an accent of spice and botanical goodness. A dreamy, feminine wine with terrific balance and oak management that aims to please out of the chute. Reviewed March 23, 2019. 94*

2018 Morgan Double L Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$. Crafted from organic grapes. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose attracts with effusive aromas of black cherry, blackberry, spice, and dark red rose petal. Unctuous purple and black berry flavors are delivered in a beautifully balanced format. Everything is in proper place and the long, haunting, purple berry driven finish is very special. Still stellar when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle predicting a long life ahead. 95*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/858/.

Pisoni Estate Vineyard

Owners: Pisoni family whose patriarch is Gary Pisoni

Acres: 40.61 acres - 34.27 acres of Pinot Noir, 4.54 acres of Chardonnay and 1.80 acres of Syrah

Years planted:

Old Block: 1982 and 2011, original planting of 5 acres of own-rooted Pisoni scion; 2 acres of newer plantings on 5C rootstock using budwood from original vines.

Big Block: 1991, 16.80 acres of Pisoni scion

Tina Block: 1995, 1.20 acres of Pisoni scion

Piedras Block: 1995, 2.50 acres of Pisoni scion

Hermanos Block: 1995, 5.00 acres of Pisoni scion

Elias Block: 1995 and 2015, 5.00 acres of Pisoni scion

New Block: 1996, 1.66 acres of Pisoni scion

Lion Block (Susan's Hill): 2006, 1.80 acres of Pisoni scion

Mommy Block: 2022, 3.50 acres of Pisoni scion

Mario Block: 1999 2.88 acres of own-rooted Old Wente Chardonnay

Lino Block: 2001, 1.80 acres of Syrah

New Block: 2011, 1.66 acres of suitcase and Old Wente own-rooted Chardonnay

Location: Northeastern corner of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA (a Gonzales mailing address)

Aspect: Rugged mountainous contours at 1,300 feet elevation overlooking the Salinas Valley to the east.

Southeast exposure to the regular sun. Significant cooling maritime influence including fog. One of the highest elevation vineyards in the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA.

Pinot Noir scions: Rumored to be suitcase cuttings from a famous Domaine in Vosne-Romanée (? La Tache) and now referred to as the Pisoni selection or 'clone.'

Soil: Well-draining, decomposed granite with high amounts of schist and quartz as well as sandy loam and gravelly loam. The soils are really poor.

Vines: Orientation is true north. Trellising is unilateral cordon, VSP. Old Block: 5' x 12' spacing, 5C rootstock (newer plantings); Big Block: 5' x 10' spacing, SO4 rootstock; Tina Block: 5' x 10' spacing, 1103P rootstock; Piedras Block: 5' x 8' spacing, own-rooted; Hermanos Block: 5' x 8' spacing SO4 rootstock; Elias Block: 5' x 8' spacing on SO4 rootstock; New Block: 4' x 7' spacing on various rootstocks; Lino Block: 4' x 7' spacing on 1103P rootstock; Mommy Block to be planted in 2022.

Farming: Certified sustainably farmed by Gary's son, Mark Pisoni. Vineyard management is meticulous, even fanatical. typically, farming goes far beyond the baseline requirements for sustainability and many organic practices are in place. Irrigation is necessary as annual rainfall is about 8-12 inches that is much less than regions that do not irrigate. Irrigation rates are adjusted by various inputs such as soil actions (cover crop, spading, etc), weather and vine data, soil moisture probes, and visual signs from the vines. A year-round and long-term team of employees care for each and every vine by hand.

Winery clients: A single wine is offered by the Pisoni family from Pisoni Estate: Pisoni Pisoni Estate Pinot Noir. Pinot Noir clients have included Peter Michael (labeled as 'Le Moulin Rouge'), Paul Lato, Testarossa, Kosta Browne, Tantara, Arcadian, Bernardus, Miura, Patz 7 Hall, Capioux Cellars, and ROAR. Some Pinot Noir grapes are blended with Garys' and Soberanes vineyards fruit in the Lucia Santa Lucia Highlands bottling produced by the Pisoni family. A Pisoni Pisoni Estate Chardonnay is produced from vines that include the initial plantings dating to 1982 and 1999. The winemaker for the Pisoni Estate wines is Gary's son Mark Pisoni. The inaugural Estate Pinot Noir was released in 1998 and Estate Chardonnay in 2010. I believe Paul Lato is the sole independent recipient of Pisoni Chardonnay grapes.

Comments: Mark Pisoni Talks Santa Lucia Highlands Wine: www.thewinewrite.com.

2011 ROAR Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., 780 cases, \$80. 24% whole cluster. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 61% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Highly aromatic, with scents of blackberry, cola, tilled earth and old leather satchel. Very silky on the palate, with mid-weight flavors of cassis, blackberry and a savory earthiness. This wine has staying power, still holding its own and probably good for at least another 5+ years.* **94**

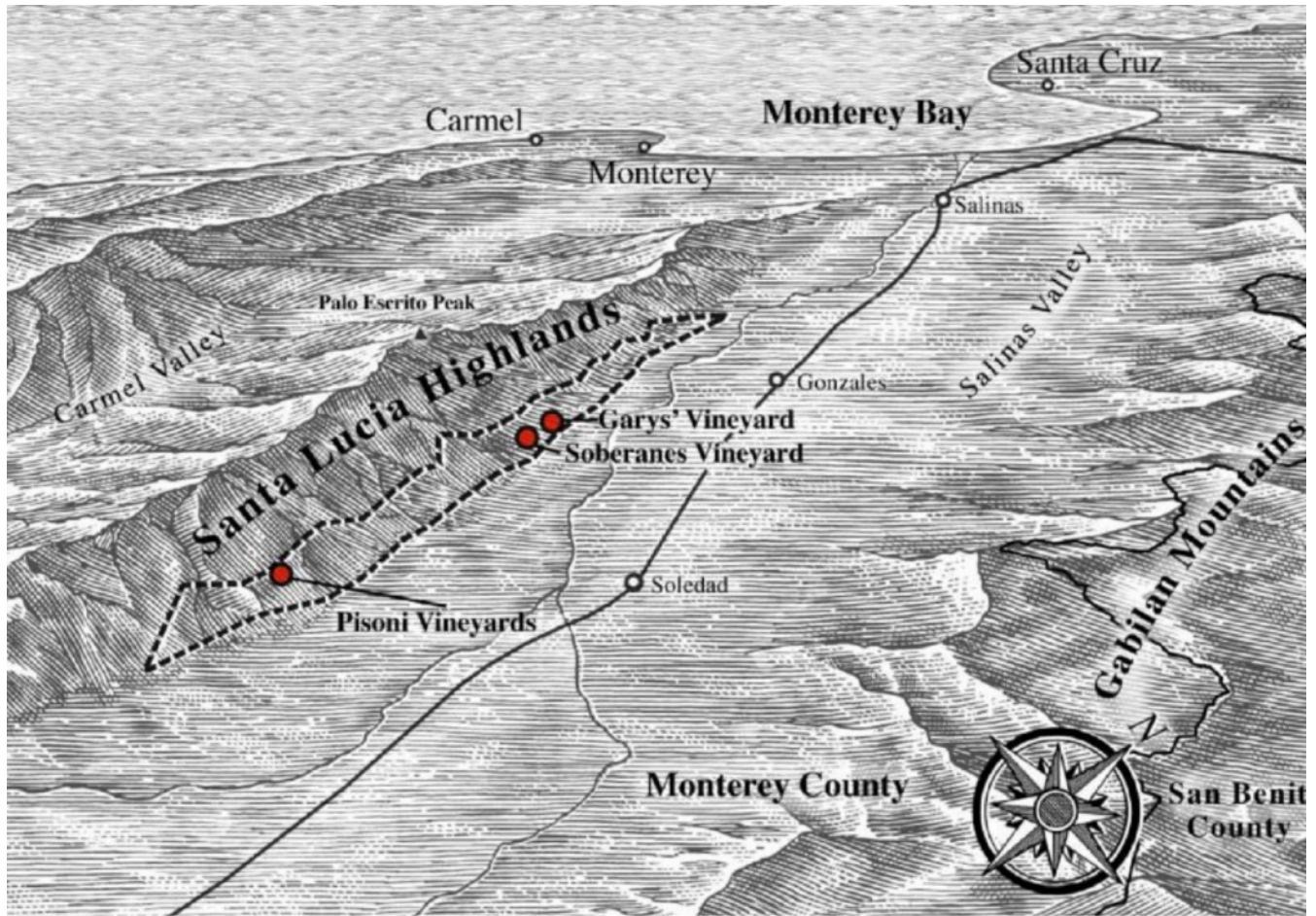
2014 Pisoni Pisoni Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$80. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Leading off are aromas of blackberry reduction, cigar box and old cask. Major sappy boysenberry and blackberry fruit with a moderately firm tannic backbone. The vivid fruit floods the mid palate in a weighty, dense style. When tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle, the nose was more fruity, the flavors were more showy with added spice, and the finish exhibited more persistence. Surprisingly young, this is a 20-year wine.* **94**

2016 Pisoni Pisoni Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$80. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of black grape juice, blackberry reduction and root beer. Mid-weight plus in density, with an array of energetic dark fruits supported by a firm but sensible tannic backbone. The fruit really floods the mouth with goodness and the sleek mouthfeel satisfies. An amazingly long finish makes this wine stand out from the pack.* **94**

2017 Pisoni Pisoni Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 725 cases, \$90. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Plenty of dark berry fruit to satisfy with complacent tannins and an unusually long finish. Excellent but not extraordinary upon opening. The wine was a bit rustic and subdued and I was wishing for more. I re-corked the bottled and waited a day. The next day it was like an angel had descended from the heavens to infuse the wine with glorious appeal. The texture was unbelievably dreamy, the fruit had an elevated purity, and I kept looking at the glass as if I could not believe what I was drinking. I have rarely experienced the feeling that overcame me, and I understood why so many have been challenged to adequately express the appeal of a special Pinot Noir. The wine tasted of perfection, a window to the Holy Grail. Reviewed December 16, 2020.* **98**

2018 Pisoni Pisoni Estate XX Anniversary Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$90. The label honors the Pisoni family's celebration of their twentieth vintage. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, spice cake, oak vanillin and loamy earth. Silken and luscious on the palate with intense blackberry and olallieberry fruit flavors in a mid-weight plus style. Rich but not jammy. Somewhat giving initially with tame tannins and a modicum of cedar-toned oak. Still a Lolita and this wine will undoubtedly benefit from another few years in the cellar. Not quite the seductive texture and mesmerizing charm of the 2017 vintage, but still a grand wine in its own right.* **96**

2019 Paul Lato "Lancelot" Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., \$95. Unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of ripe strawberry, black cherry and earthy flora. The flavors echo the aromas with a bit of spice. A bit lighter in this vintage, with a juicy underbelly and reserved tannins. Easily enjoyed now, with excellent balance (no alcohol rears its head at this high ABV). Considerably more enjoyable when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle.* **94**



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/238/. I have reviewed every vintage of Pisoni Estate Pinot Noir from 2004-2018

Tondré Grapefield

Owners: Father Tondré and son Joe Alarid

Acres: 104 - 81 acres of Pinot Noir, 18 acres of Chardonnay, 3 acres of Riesling, and 2 acres of Syrah

Years planted: The original planting of 6.5 acres was in 1997.

Location: In the center of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA on its eastern border just to the south of Garys' Vineyard

Aspect: Southeast-facing slopes at 300'-400' elevation. Strong maritime influence from Monterey Bay.

Pinot Noir scions: Pommard 4, Dijon 115, 667, 777, 943, and faux 828, and Swan selection

Soils: Ancient glacial soils consisting of decomposed granite, gravelly and sandy loam.

Farming: SIP Certified sustainable. Meticulous farming by Joe Alarid who has garnered a reputation as one of the region's best growers. The focus is on efficient canopy management encompassing leaf pulling, strategic water application and nutrient balancing.

Winery clients: Tondré Wines was started by Joe and his wife Penny in 2005. The winemaker is Anthony Craig who also crafts Tondré vineyard Pinot Noir for his own Sonnet label and the Silver Mountain label. Tondré wines are on the wine lists of many of California's most notable restaurants. Other winery clients have included Bernardus Vineyards & Winery, Cima Collina, Coterie Cellars, David Bruce Winery, La Rochelle Winery, Morgan, Wrath, Testarossa, Joyce, Truckee River Winery, Sarah's Vineyard, Ser Winery, and Typicité Wines.

Comments: Over the years, I have drunk several vintages of Sonnet Tondré Grapefield Pinot Noir and the wines were both superb and reasonably priced (but not well-marketed). One can find some vintages of Sonnet and Silver Mountain Tondré Grapefield Pinot Noir through the Silver Mountain Vineyards website and tasting room. Tondré Wines Pinot Noir is sold through a number of California wine retailers.

2012 Silver Mountain Vineyards Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., \$44. *Moderate garnet color with slight yellowing of the rim in the glass., Energetic aromas of cherry, spice, leather and toast. Holding its own, with mid-weight flavors of black cherry, spice, char. root beer and toasty oak. Slightest alcoholic lip burn on the modest finish. 90*

2014 Silver Mountain Vineyards Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$44. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Enticing aromas of cherry, spiced rum, purple grape and oak. Impressive cohesiveness with mid-weight flavors of black cherry and cola infused with complimentary oak. Impressive cherry-packed finish with some length. 93*

2015 Silver Mountain Vineyards Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$44. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. A complex nose offers aromas of dark cherry, cola, earth, terra-cotta and a hint of oak. Robust, mid-weight plus wine, with flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, dark chocolate. toast, and gingerbread. Velvety in texture with minimal tannins and a modest finish. 92*

2016 Silver Mountain Vineyards Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$45. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose is infused with aromas of cherry, raspberry and baking spices. Impressive charm and balance in a middleweight style offering flavors of darker cherry and berries with the faintest oak in the background. Appealing vibrancy with a deeply aromatic finish. 93*

2017 Sonnet Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 340 cases, \$45. Aged 20 months in 33% Hungarian oak barrels. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of rose petal, pomegranate and subtle oak lead to a deliciously spiced black cherry core. Very spirited with uplifting acidity and supportive tannins. Very fresh and appealing, a compliment of oak, and a very persistent finish. Sonnet Pinot Noir wines are always a good value if you can find them. 94*

2018 Montagne Russe Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 15.3% alc., 100 cases, \$N/A. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. This is a well-oaken wine on both the nose and palate. Aromas of black cherry compote and rose petal lead to a mid-weight plus styled wine with integrated tannins and a silken mouthfeel. The alcohol is well submerged and the long finish is replete with ripe-fruited goodness. 90*

2018 Morgan Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 126 cases, \$65, Clones 777 and 115. 100% de-stemmed, native yeast primary fermentation, and aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Enthralling nose with vibrant aromas of cherry, baking spices and sandalwood. Lighter weighted in this vintage, with a core of red cherry and red berry fruits framed by caramel oak. Very charming in style with soft tannins and good length on the finish. The light fruit is somewhat superseded by oak. Reviewed October 4, 2020. 91*

2018 Tondré Wines Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., \$43. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Well-scented, with aromas of cherry pie, baking spices and oak-driven vanillin and caramel. Black cherry and purple berry fruit flavors lead the way along with hints of spice cake and oak. Suave in texture, with balanced tannins and a gigantic finish that seems to last 30 seconds. 93*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/86/.

Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards III: Central Coast - Sta. Rita Hills

Domaine de la Côte

Owners: Raj Parr, Sashi Moorman and business partners acquired the 40.5-acre property from Evening Land Vineyards. Sashi had developed the vineyards here in 2007 along with Phillip King.

Acres: 40.5 acres of Pinot Noir organized by six vineyards: Memorious (3.5 acres), Bloom's field (7.5 acres), Siren's Call (3 acres), Clos Juliet (1 acre), La Côte (9.5 acres) and 15.5 acres of appellation Sta. Rita Hills.

Year planted: 2007

Location: Far western reaches of the Sta. Rita Hills AVA, only seven miles from the Pacific Ocean in the city of Lompoc.

Aspect: South-facing hillside rising to an elevation of 700 feet. Each vineyard has a unique aspect including elevation and microclimate.

Pinot Noir scions: Heritage selections

Soil: A 25-million-year-old seabed with clay loam over shale and some diatomaceous earth that is unique to the Sta. Rita Hills AVA.

Vines: Extremely high vine densities between 4,000 and 7,000 vines per acre that is unprecedented for the Sta. Rita Hills AVA.

Farming: Organically farmed from 2007 to 2016 and then transitioned to biodynamic practices during the 2017 growing season.

Winery clients: None, a monopole

Comments: The winery's name translates to 'Estate of the Slope.' The winery in Lompoc is three miles from the Domaine's vineyards. Sashi Moorman is the winemaker who employs a significant amount of whole cluster fermentation during vinification.

2012 Domaine de la Côte Bloom's Field Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., magnum. 50% whole cluster fermentation. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Very seductive nose offering soaring aromas of cherry, burnt tobacco, sweet mulch and sap. The vibrant, middleweight flavors of black cherry and black raspberry are enhanced with accents of clove and cardamom spices. Slightly earthy with a shadow of oak and gossamer tannins. Juicy acidity propels the cherry-imbued finish. The wine still has 5+ years left in this format. 92*

2018 Domaine de la Côte Bloom's field Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 500 cases, \$75. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Lovely aromas of dark rose petal, black cherry, peppery herbs, burnt tobacco and pine sap. Less whole cluster input on the palate, showing mid-weight flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, and spice with a subtle herbaceous underpinning. Sleek in the mouth, with matched tannins, a touch of oak, and a lengthy finish. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. The infusion of herbs will please whole cluster fans. 93*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/1727/.

Clos Pepe Vineyard

Owners: Steve and Cathy Pepe and Cathy's son Wes Hagen established this estate vineyard and wine label. The couple purchased this former horse ranch property in 1994 and release the inaugural Pinot Noir in 2000 that was well-received by wine critics. With the 2015 vintage, The Pepes entered into a 15-year vineyard lease with Hall Wines of Napa which markets Clos Pepe grapes under the Hall's WALT label. The Pepes retained ownership of the property and lived in the home on the estate. In May 2021, the Pepe family listed Clos Pepe vineyards property and home for sale so the future of this vineyard is unclear.

Acres: 24 acres of Pinot Noir and 4 acres of Chardonnay

Years planted: 1996: 14 acres of Dijon 115, 667, 777 and Pommard. 14 acres of Chardonnay were planted in 1994 but because of poor ripening, in 2001 10 acres of the Chardonnay planted to Wente clones were budded over to Dijon clones 115 and 777 of Pinot Noir

Location: West Highway 246, 8 miles east of Lompoc, and just west of Babcock Winery.

Aspect: Gently sloping hillside location

Pinot Noir scions: Pommard, Dijon 115, 667 and 777

Soil: Well-draining calcareous shale with some sandy loam.

Farming: Sustainable, organic with biodynamic practices during Wes Hagen's management.

Winery clients: About 25% of the estate fruit was retained for the Clos Pepe Vineyard wines that were crafted by Wes Hagen who also managed the vineyard through the years. The last Clos Pepe Vineyard Estate Pinot Noir was released from the 2014 vintage. There have been multiple eager clients over the years including A.P. Vin, Arcadian, Au Bon Climat, Bonaccorsi Wine Company, Brewer-Clifton Winery, Carr Vineyards, Clarice, Copain, Flying Goat, Hitching Post, Ken Brown Wines, Kenneth Crawford, Loring Wine Co., Roessler Cellars, Siduri, The Ojai Vineyard, Tyler, and WALT.

Comments: The name, Clos Pepe ('Clo Peppy') comes from the French word 'clos' and the vineyard proprietor's name, Steve Pepe. For a full understanding of the origins and history of this vineyard, consult the book written by Stephen Pepe, "Clos Pepe: A Vigneron's Quest for Great Dirt," or

get in touch with Wes who is now the winemaker for J. Wilkes Wines in the Santa Maria Valley. During its heyday, Clos Pepe Vineyard was a shining star in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA and fortunately Adam Lee is carrying on the tradition and producing very special Pinot Noir wines from this vineyard under his Clarice label.

2017 Loring Wine Company Clos Pepe Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 400 cases, \$54, screw cap. Clones 115 and 777. Aged 10 months in 15% new French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Uplifting aromas of black cherry and spice rub lead to a mid weight plus styled wine with a generous core of delicious black cherry and purple berry fruit. Supple tannins provide marvelous support and the energetic acidity adds vigor. A compelling wine with an extremely long finish. Reviewed February 23, 2019. 94*

2019 Beau Marchais Clos Pepe Vineyard Quest (West) Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 15.1% alc., \$95. Pommard and 667 clones. 33% whole cluster. 48-day extended maceration. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Leading off are aromas of blackberry, blueberry, pomegranate, tilled earth and seasoned oak. Mid-weight plus in style, packed with a dense core of purple and black fruits that are a bit unyielding at this point. A floral note adds charm. Showing a little more oak and tannin than the East bottling but with a flood of fruit on a longer finish. This wine offers more nuances and I found more appealing than the East bottling. Surely this wine will benefit from a couple of years in the cellar. Reviewed March 21, 2021. 93*

2019 Beau Marchais Clos Pepe Vineyard Estate (East) Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 15.1% alc., \$95. Clones 115 and Pommard. *Complex nose offering aromas of blackberry, cassis, violets, blueberries, underbrush, oak spice and sweet pipe smoke. Mid-weight plus in heft with flavors that replicate the aromas with added tastes of plum, tar and spice. Big-boned, yet sleek in texture. Infused with plenty of felty, dry tannins that contribute some astringency to the long finish. The alcohol is well positioned in the overall balance. A tasting of the wine the following day from an opened bottle required some coaxing in the glass to reveal itself. Reviewed March 21, 2021. 91*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/88/.

Fe Ciega Vineyard

Owners: Originally, this was an estate vineyard established by Rick Longoria of Longoria Wines and owned by Hank and Brenda Klehn. Adam Tolmach, proprietor and winemaker of The Ojai Vineyard, purchased the vineyard in January 2021.

Acres: 9 acres of Pinot Noir on a 40-acre property

Years planted:

1998: 7.75 acres of Pinot Noir

2008: 1.25 acres of Pinot Noir and .75 acres of Chardonnay

Location: Established in the middle of a ranch at the end of Sweeney Road about 8 miles east of the Lompoc city limits. It is at the western end of the Sta. Rita Hills AVA, just west and across the Santa Ynez River from the Sanford & Benedict Vineyard. The location is sometimes referred to as the 'Pinot Bowl' because other vineyards within view are La Encantada, La Rinconada, Sea Smoke, Mt. Carmel, Bentrack, and Radian.

Aspect: Situated on a small mesa at 350 feet elevation above the Santa Ynez River with gentle southern exposure. One block has east-west rows and the other north-south rows.

Pinot Noir scions: Pommard 5, Mt. Eden, and Dijon 115 and 667

Soil: Clay loam with shale fragments

Vines: 4' x 8' spacing

Farming: Tolmach plans to convert the vineyard to organic farming practices and optimize the vineyard's resistance to drought vintages.

Winery clients: Clients have included Longoria Wines, The Ojai Vineyard and Foxen Vineyard & Winery.

Comments: The Ojai Vineyard has produced a Fe Ciega vineyard-designated Pinot Noir since 2003. The vineyard name was originally Blind Faith (from the band name of rock music fame) but because the name was already copyrighted, Rick chose the Spanish translation, 'Fe Ciega.' Recently, Rick Longoria announced his retirement as a longtime winery owner.

2018 The Ojai Vineyard Fe Ciega Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., \$53. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Engaging aromas of black cherry, rose petal and herb cupboard. Exuberant flavors of cherry, strawberry and cherry with a bit of spice and dried herbs in a middleweight fashion. The aromas and flavors pick up interest over time in the glass and reach a peak the following day from a previously opened bottle. The svelte tannins and long finish complete the grand impression. 94*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/214/.

Fiddlestix Vineyard

Owners: Kathy Joseph acquired the 133-acre former flower farm in 1996.

Acres: 96 (about 91 acres of Pinot Noir)

Years planted: Initial plantings date to 1998.

Location: Western end of a transverse-oriented (east-west) valley in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA at mile marker 7.28 on Santa Rosa Road across from the famed Sanford & Benedict Vineyard.

Aspect: The proximity to the Pacific Ocean (10 miles) in a narrow valley of lower latitude ensures adequately comfortable conditions for the vines. Fog hangs over the vines until mid-morning, the temperature barely rises about 75 degrees, and the coastal breezes cool the grapes throughout the long day of sunshine. Vines are primarily north-south facing.

Pinot Noir scions: Pommard 4 and 5, Dijon 113, 115, 667, and 777, and Swan selection

Soil: Clay intermixed with fossilized ancient sea shells and gravelly chert

Vines: 1556 vines per acre, 4' x 7', 4' x 8', and 5' x 7' spacing, VSP trellising. 32 mini-blocks with unique combinations of seven clones and three rootstocks (101-14, 3309, and 110 R).

Farming: Owner Kathy Joseph leads conscientious, meticulous, and sustainable farming in partnership with Atlas Vineyard Management. Shoot thinning, leaf pulling, and crop thinning is performed numerous times in a single season.

Winery clients: Among many, Ancien, Anglim, Arcadian, Bonaccorsi, Byron, Cold Heaven, Cornerstone Cellars, Dragonette, Etude, Fess Parker, Hartford Court, Hitching Post, Jaffurs Wine Cellars, Pali, Prodigal, Ryan Cochrane, RN Estate, Rusack, Summerland, and Wedell.

Comments: Kathy Joseph established Fiddlehead Cellars in 1989, producing Pinot Noir (she retains about 15% of the vineyard's production for her own label), Grüner Veltliner, and Sauvignon Blanc (sourced). Kathy was a pioneer among California's women winemakers. Production is at her winery in the 'Wine Ghetto' of Lompoc, and includes Pinot Noir from the Willamette Valley. Fiddlestix Vineyard played a cameo role in the movie, 'Sideways.' Besides Pinot Noir, Fiddlestix Vineyard is planted to Chardonnay and Grüner Veltliner.

2014 Pali Wine Co Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., \$60. Clones 667, 777, 115 and Pommard 4. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The aromas are most vibrant upon opening, showing cherry, sweet pipe tobacco, and old leather. Agreeable mid-weight spiced cherry core with added notes of black tea and earth. Firm tannins ply the background leaving behind a bit of astringency on the finish. Alcohol does not stick out but there is awareness.* **89**

2017 Hartford Court Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 195 cases, \$70. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Seductive aromas of Bing cherry and oak spice. Light to mid-weight in richness, featuring flavors of black cherry, black raspberry and a hint of oak spice. Very fine grain tannins and upbeat acidity compliment the fruit core. Plenty of gentle goodness in a glamorous wine that exudes class.* **93**

2018 Ancien Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.4% alc., 181 cases, \$58. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak. *Inoculated with proprietary yeasts for primary fermentation. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, a majority new. Wine held for a year after bottling before release. Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. A fruit-driven nose displaying aromas of Bing cherry and boysenberry with minor notes of rose petal, herb cracker and nutty oak. A sappy core of purple berry and plum fruit is deep on the palate. Beautifully crafted, with integrated tannins, bright acidity and a milky softness. The vivid and flamboyant finish is amazingly persistent. I can't say enough good things about this wine that is the best from this vineyard that I have tasted in recent memory.* **95**

2019 Cornerstone Cellars Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 440 cases, \$64. 50% Dijon 667 and 50% Dijon 777. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Fragrant aromas of black cherry compote, spice and toasty oak. Deep, luscious flavors of dark cherry reduction, black raspberry and tarragon. Very polished, with admirable balance and a generously fruited and very long finish. My only nit is the noticeable oak that plies the background.* **92**



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/135/.

Sanford & Benedict Vineyard

Owners: Sanford Winery/Trlato Wine Group (since 2002)

Acres: 146+ acres of Pinot Noir including 51 acres of original Pinot Noir plantings

Years planted: 1971-1972: 120 acres of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Riesling, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon vines were planted initially. Additional plantings of Pinot Noir through the years since.

Location: Nestled in a site between the Santa Ynez Mountains and San Rafael Mountains in an east-to-west valley adjacent La Rinconada Vineyard.

Aspect: North-south vine rows. The vineyard is a full 20 degrees cooler than Napa and Sonoma on the hottest days making for a cool and lengthened growing season.

Pinot Noir scions: The original Pinot Noir scion was an Mt. Eden selection acquired directly from Mount Eden and FPS 18 (Gamay Beaujolais). Currently, scions include Pommard, Wädenswil, Calera, Swan, Martini 15, 90, 91, 97, Dijon 114, 115, 667, 777, and 943 distributed over 35 blocks. Each block consists of a single clone or selection. Each block is harvested, fermented, and aged separately.

Soils: 24 unique soil variants. A soil mapping project was initiated in 2006. Primarily calcium-rich clay loam containing fractured shale and chert with good water-holding capacity.

Vines: Variable vine spacing and rootstocks among the different blocks. The original Pinot Noir vines are planted on their own roots. All vines are on a VSP trellis except the original Chardonnay vines that are California sprawl.

Farming: Sustainable and organic but not certified

Winery clients: Sanford Winery retains 60% of the fruit and the rest is sold to about 30 wineries including Au Bon Climat, Chanin Wines, Fess Parker, Gary Farrell Winery & Vineyards, Ken Brown, Liquid Farm, Lutum, Pence Vineyards & Winery, Racines, Sandhi, Testarossa, Tyler, WALT, Wedell Cellars, Whitcraft, and Windrun. Most of the sourced wines are vineyard-designated. Because of the many

different blocks, clones/selections, and soils, as well as variable microclimates in different parts of the vineyard, Sanford & Benedict Pinot Noir will not taste the same from every winery client. The Sanford Winery bottlings highlight the soil variations and uniqueness of each block. Only Sanford Winery produces an Old Vines Pinot Noir bottling.

Comments: Richard Sanford and Michael Benedict were the first to discover the potential of the Santa Rita Hills as an ideal region for growing Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The vineyard is home to the oldest Pinot Noir vines in Santa Barbara County. There are 10 blocks planted to Chardonnay (Wente, 15, 76, 96, and an S&B selection).

2016 Chanin Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., \$30. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Pleasing aromas of cranberry, prickly pear and clay. Light in weight offering flavors of oak-dusted cherry, cranberry and spice. A good grip of acidity drives the red cherry finish. Easygoing with restrained tannins and a modest finish. Unchanged when sampled the following day from a previously opened bottle. A solid wine but not endearing. 91*

2017 Sandhi Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.8% alc., \$45. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Whole cluster driven aromas of spiced cherry, strawberry, and burnt tobacco. Lighter and elegantly composed, with a core of cherry fruit. A bit smoky and stemmy (green), with a tart cherry finish of modest length. 89*

2018 Sanford Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 2,611 cases, \$75. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. Composed of 11 clones and represents the best lots of the harvest. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, spice cabinet, and vanilla latte. Somewhat delicate in a mid-weight style with flavors of red cherry and red berry accompanied by cloving oak. Silky in the mouth with svelte tannins and a modestly long finish. 91*

2018 Sanford Block 4D Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 212 cases, \$90. Sourced from a north-facing slope with rocky Botella clay loam soil. First planting of Dijon clone 943. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Reserved but pleasant aromas of dark cherry and purple berry. A fresh and crisp, fruit-driven style with plenty of black cherry and blackberry fruits to satisfy. There are added hints of dark chocolate and sweet oak. Nicely balanced, with minimal tannins and a richly-appointed, purple-fruited finish. 92*

2018 Sanford Block 6 Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 221 cases, \$90. A limited release from a steep, north-facing slope with rocky, calcium rich, clay loam soils. Clone 667. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The aromas unfold over time in the glass, revealing cherry, earthy flora and rose petal. Light to mid-weight in style and elegant and silky in character with a charge of black cherry flavor supported by harmonious tannins and excellent acid-driven vibrancy. Easygoing and easy to like, with a cherry-imbued finish. 93*

2019 Sanford Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 7,379 cases, \$35. 44% Sanford & Benedict Vineyard and 56% La Rinconada Vineyard. A blend of 8 different Pinot Noir selections from several different soil types. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark cherry, ripe strawberry, candy apple, spice and graham. The mid-weight flavors echo the aromas of cherry and spice. Very open and giving with juicy acidity and a modest but satisfying finish. An excellent everyday wine. 90*

2018 Sanford Founders' Vines Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 61 cases, \$N/A. The grapes for this special wine come from the original, own-rooted planting in 1971. A tribute to the pioneering fathers of this vineyard, Michael Benedict and Richard Sanford. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 28% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Seductive aromas of red berry, underbrush and tilled earth. Delicious and complex in a middleweight style, with an array of flavors including red cherry and raspberry, spice, dried herbs and cocoa. Very intriguing and notably refined with subtle tannins and the longest finish of all the 2018 Sanford Pinot Noirs. A connoisseur's Pinot Noir that shows all the glory of old vine Pinot Noir. 95*

2019 Testarrosa Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 576 cases, \$74. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 54% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark cherry and baking spice pick up intensity over time in the glass. A very comforting, velvety mouthfeel creates a favorable initial impression. Mid-weight flavors of cherry and raspberry are accompanied by a thread of citrus in the background. Acid-driven freshness and vibrancy add to the appeal. The finish is persistent and quenching. Reviewed June 13, 2021. 94*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/53/.

Sea Smoke Vineyard

Owners: Bob Davids and Prescott-Ashe (who invested in Sea Smoke and became a capital partner in 2012).

Acres: 160, primarily Pinot Noir

Years planted: 1999: 100 acres of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. 2012: 60 acres of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Some replanting is ongoing.

Location: 7.5 miles west of the Pacific coastline and just north of the Santa Ynez River in the 'Pinot Bowl' of the Sta. Rita Hills AVA. Situated above Fiddlestick Vineyard.

Aspect: South-facing hillside bluffs with an elevation of 350'-650', 8.75% to 36.4% slopes, north-south rows.

Pinot Noir scions: Ten clones: 113, 667, 777, 459, Wädenswil 2A, Pommard 5, Mt. Eden, 09 and 16

Soils: A base of semi-siliceous shale with calcareous strata and diatomite under a top of shallow Botella, Gazos, and Lopez clays.

Vines: 1999: 3.5' x 8' spacing, single guyot on VSP, rootstocks primarily Riparia Gloire, 1091-14, and 3309. 2012: 3' x 6' spacing, single guyot on VSP, rootstocks primarily 101-14 and 3309 with some 44-53. As portions of blocks are replanted, higher lime-tolerant rootstocks like 1103P and 110/140R are used.

Farming: Organically and biodynamically (80 acres) farmed and sustainably farmed since 2003. The goal is low crop yields and small grape clusters of intense flavor. Every vine receives personal handling from the vineyard crew seven to eight times each year.

Winery clients: None currently, a monopole. Some Pinot Noir was sold to Foxen for the first ten years and some Chardonnay was previously sold to Brewer-Clifton. The winery, located in Lompoc, has never bought fruit.

Comments: Labels in the 2009-2010 vintages displayed the wording, "California Grand Cru."

2017 Sea Smoke Southing Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., \$70. Released October 2019. 100% de-stemmed, inoculated with cultured yeasts after a 5-day cold soak. Manual punch downs. Aged in French oak barrels, 28% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Really nice aromas of black raspberry, black cherry, rose petal, and damp soil. The flavors echo the aromas with a slight echo of oak. Good harmony with quenching acidity and suave tannins. The finish is amazingly long. This wine is now ready to be the centerpiece of your next special dinner.* **95**

2018 Sea Smoke Southing Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., \$N/A. Released October 2020. 100% de-stemmed, inoculated with cultured yeasts after a 5-day cold soak, and aged in French oak barrels, 28% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Very complex nose displaying aromas of earthy flora, black cherry, white pepper, tarragon, and seasoned oak. A delightful wine with a discrete concentration of black cherry and black raspberry fruit flavors with a valued touch of spice. A little more elegant than the 2017 Southing but offering a very long finish like that wine. Excellent rapport between the fruit, tannins and acidity.* **94**

2017 Sea Smoke Ten Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., \$82. Released October 2019. Composed of ten clones from which the wine takes its name. 100% de-stemmed, inoculated with cultured yeasts after a 5-day cold soak, aged in French oak barrels, 68% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, blackberry, dark rose petal and earthy flora lead off. Mouth-filling, extravagant purple and black fruits attack the palate in a mid-weight plus style. Sleek and polished with a touch of oak. The finish is not as long as the 2017 Southing bottling but this wine has more mid palate impact. Still somewhat tight compared to the 2017 Southing with more tannins and probably more age worthy. Much better the following day with more aromatic goodness.* **94**

2018 Sea Smoke Ten Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., N/A. Released October 2020. 100% de-stemmed, inoculated with cultured yeasts after a 5-day cold soak, and aged in French oak barrels, 68% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Brooding aromas initially exhibiting aromas of earth-charged dark fruits. Mid-weight plus in size, with plenty of blackberry and cassis fruit to satisfy. Oak plays a noticeable role. Tightly coiled, with an extremely long, black raspberry infused finish. More personality when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. Typically the Southing bottling is more approachable and features dark red fruits. The Ten bottling is bigger, richer, and displays more tannin and oak input while blacker fruits are featured.* **94**



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/141/.

Elite California Pinot Noir Vineyards III

Central Coast - Other Appellations

Bien Nacido Vineyard - Santa Maria Valley AVA

Owners: The Miller Family Wine Company (part of The Thornhill Companies)

Acres: 800 acres with 250 acres of Pinot Noir (the exact acreage is fluid as old vines are removed and re-planting and new planting is ongoing).

Years planted: Initial planting of Pinot Noir was in 1973. Multiple additional Pinot Noir plantings including in 1996 and 2006.

Location: A few miles east of the town of Santa Maria in the Santa Maria Valley AVA. The vineyard is in a portion of the historic Rancho Tepusquet.

Aspect: Situated in a valley that is open to an east-to-west corridor leading to the Pacific Ocean 16 miles to the west. Since the vineyard lies at 34 degrees latitude, it receives intense sunlight from a directly-overhead sun. Elevation is 600'-900' with 15-40% slope.

Pinot Noir scions: The original 1973 plantings were on their own roots and included Martini clone 13, and Swan, and Calera selections. Subsequent plantings have included Pommard, Mt. Eden, and Dijon 114, 115, 667, 777, and faux 828.

Soils: Diverse as would be expected with such a vast vineyard including sandy loam, chalk, gravelly loam, marine uplifting volcanic, and limestone.

Vines: Both own-rooted, nearly 50-year-old vines, and more recently planted rooted vines.

Farming: Chris Hammell has been the longtime vineyard manager. Most of the vineyard blocks are allocated to small producers and farmed according to their standards. SIP certified.

Winery clients: A Bien Nacido Estate Pinot Noir has been produced since 2007 from the oldest own-rooted vines dating to 1973 and vines planted in 1996 and 2006. An Estate The Captain Pinot Noir is produced from Block 40 high-density vines planted in 2006. A very limited bottling, LXXIII Estate Pinot Noir, is from Blocks G, N, and Q, dating to 1973 (some of the oldest vines still producing in California). Many eager Pinot Noir clients have included Au Bon Climat, Byron, Calera Wine Co, Chanin, Dolin Estate, El Lugar Wines, Fess Parker, Foxen, Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery, Longoria, MacRostie, Migration, Pali Wine Co, Qupé, Sanctuary, Sandler Wine Co, Scar of the Sea, Summerland, Tantara, The Ojai Vineyard, Timbre Winery, Twomey Cellars, and Tyler Winery.

Comments: The oldest Pinot Noir blocks include G, N, and Q that are planted to multiple clones/selections including Pommard, Martini 13, Swan and Calera. The vineyard is planted to multiple varieties besides Pinot Noir including Chardonnay, Viognier, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, Rousanne, Merlot, Barbera, and Nebbiolo. Bien Nacido Vineyard and Solomon Hills Vineyard Estate wines are available for tasting at the destination tasting room located along Grand Avenue in downtown Los Olivos.

2014 Bien Nacido Estate Old Vines Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$100. sourced from the oldest own-rooted vines in Bien Nacido Vineyard. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose reveals itself over time in the glass to offer a marriage of cherry and toasty oak aromas. Light to mid-weight in style, with flavors of cherry, strawberry, spice and toasty oak. Elegantly fruited, even close to shallow with an appealing juiciness. The wine has a rustic, savory bearing with a modicum of toasty oak in the background. Better over time in the glass, showing off a resolute but not especially long finish. Reviewed August 29, 2020. 91*

2016 Foxen Block 8 Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.4% alc., \$60. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Very savory nose highlighting aromas of dried herbs, stem, saddle leather and tilled earth. Fruit shows up on the palate as sweet blackberry and pomegranate but still dominated by savory notes. Sleek in texture with mild tannins and a cut of citrus-infused fruit on the finish. More fruit comes to the forefront when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle. 92*

2017 Gary Farrell Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., \$70. Pommard clone from the legendary Q Block, considered the most prestigious Pinot Noir block in this vineyard. *Light garnet color in the glass. The scent of dark red cherry and berry, oak spice and floral perfume leads to a mid-weight infusion of oak-kissed Bing cherry and dark strawberry fruit flavors. Fresh and satisfying without noticeable*

tannins, silky in texture, and offering an arrow of acidity that drives a lip-smacking, extended finish. Reviewed August 29, 2020. 93

2018 Gary Farrell Bien Nacido Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.1% alc., 565 cases, \$70. Released May 2021. 100% Pommard selection from the legendary Q Block, considered the most prestigious Pinot Noir block in this vineyard. Some whole clusters added later during fermentation. 4-7 day cold soak, 7-10 day extended maceration after fermentation. Aged 15 months on the primary lees in French oak barrels, 40% new. *A lighter, elegantly styled wine that still packs a punch. Lovely aromas of red grape, cherry, strawberry and raspberry that offer noticeable mid-palate intensity. A subtle savory underbelly of spice and herbs lend interest. Very refreshing and easy to approach, with an incredibly long finish. 93*

2018 Bien Nacido Estate Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., \$50. The goal of this wine is to reflect the diversity of soils and unique voice of this vineyard. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose has fruit (strawberry, red currant), spice, and earthy elements. Flavors of black cherry, ripe strawberry and red licorice with the slightest vegetative underbelly. Middleweight in fashion, with a silky mouthfeel, balanced tannins, well-mannered acidity and a modest but pleasing finish. 92*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/1537/.

Calera Jensen Vineyard, Mt. Harlan AVA

Owners: Calera was originally founded in 1975 by Josh Jensen who is often referred to as 'Mr. Pinot.' Duckhorn Wine Company purchased Calera Wine Company in 2017, including the winery, the brand, the tasting room, and the winery's prime vineyards. Duckhorn was acquired by San Francisco-based TSG Consumer Partners in 2016.

Acres: 13.6

Years planted: 1975 (first tiny harvest in 1978 and the first commercial noteworthy wine in 1980)

Location: A remote property in the Gavilan Mountain Range in San Benito County that was a former limestone quarry.

Aspect: Four hillside blocks, each with a different exposure at 2,200 feet elevation. The site is cooler than many other vineyard locations due to the direct flow of cold marine air off the Pacific Ocean through the Monterey Bay coastline.

Pinot Noir scions: One-third Calera selection rumored to be suitcase budwood possibly from Chalona and two-thirds are an unknown nursery bench graft source originating in California.

Soil: Limestone

Vines: 726 vines per acre, often yielding less than 1 ton per acre. Modified VSP trellis. St. George rootstock.

Farming: Certified organic since 2008. A dedicated vineyard crew makes multiple passes through the vineyard almost daily to ensure appropriate vineyard management.

Winery clients: None, a monopole

Comments: Jensen Vineyard is named after founder Josh Jensen's father, Stephen Jensen. Calera is the only winery in the Mt. Harlan AVA. The vineyards are located in the Mt. Harlan AVA, but the winery is technically outside the AVA, so "estate bottled" cannot be used on the labels. One could easily make an argument to include Calera's Selleck, Reed, and Mills vineyards in any listing of elite California Pinot Noir vineyards, but Jensen Vineyard has always been my clear favorite among the four vineyards.

2016 Calera Jensen Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir 14.8% alc., 1,000 cases, \$95. Calera selection. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Engaging aromas of plum, blackest cherry, and sous bois. Gracious in the mouth, with a mid weight core of black cherry and black raspberry fruits with deft oak dressing. Firm, but not intrusive tannins and noticeable cut on the the finish that goes on and on. There are several features of this wine that make it special including the seductive texture, the energy imparted by good natural acidity, the purity of fruit flavor, the subtle savory thread, and the extremely long, grand cru finish. Much more appealing when sampled the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. An exceptional wine. Reviewed June 2019. 95*

2018 Calera Jensen Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., \$100. Calera selection. Whole cluster fermented, native yeast. Aged in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose rises up over time revealing wonderful aromas of dark berries, plum, dried beef, clay and wine cellar. Inviting flavors of purple grape and pomegranate framed by supportive fine-grain tannins and a good cut of acidity. The finish is drenched in ripe dark fruits and is amazingly long. The fruit is definitely ripe but not overly mature. Even better when tasted the following day from a previously opened bottle when some spice shows up and the long finish continues to amaze. Very age worthy. 95*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/73/.

Hoffman Mountain Ranch (HMR) Vineyard, Adelaida Hills AVA

Owners: The original Hoffman Mountain Ranch property was owned by Dr. and Mrs. Hoffman beginning in 1961. Financial difficulties caused them to lose the property in 1982 to IntraLeisure, Inc. In 1989, the ranch was sold to Japanese investors who renamed it San Luis Winery, Inc. The Van Steenwyk family, owners of nearby Adelaida Vineyards & Winery, assumed ownership in 1994.

Acres: 34.94 acres total with 30+ acres of Pinot Noir and 4 acres of Chardonnay. 23 of the 34+ acres are

original Pinot Noir vines with the remaining 11 acres established in 1999 and 2011 using cuttings taken from the original vines.

Years planted:

1964: original Pinot Noir plantings

1999 and 2011: additional Pinot Noir plantings using budwood from the original vines.

Location: Adelaida District AVA in the western hills of Paso Robles

Aspect: 14 miles inland from the Pacific coastline at 1,600'-1,725' elevation. Cooler than most vineyards in the Paso Robles area. The original Pinot Noir vines are south-facing on the lower portion of a steep slope.

Pinot Noir scions: Mt. Eden or Martini

Soils: Chalky, limestone-rich subsoils

Vines: The original Pinot Noir plantings are own-rooted. The rootstock is uncertain but winemaker Jeremy Weintraub believes the leaves and cluster morphology suggest Martini clone on St. George rootstock.

Farming: Current winemaker Jeremy Weintraub has farmed the vineyard organically since 2013. Yields are less than one ton per acre.

Winery clients: None, a monopole

Comments: The HMR Vineyard is the oldest producing Pinot Noir vineyard in the Central Coast. More than 98% of the original vines are still producing as are the replants established from cuttings of the original vines in 1999 and 2011. An HMR Estate Pinot Noir from the original old vine plantings has been produced since 1996 but the wines have only reached their full potential under the stewardship of winemaker and vineyard manager Jeremy Weintraub.

2018 Adelaida HMR Estate Vineyard Adelaida District Paso Robles Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$60.

Moderately light garnet color in the glass. A nose you could drink, with hi-tone scents of fresh black cherry, cardamom spice and sous bois. The layers of discreetly concentrated and delicious black cherry and blackberry fruits are expansive on the mid palate and finish. A riff of spice adds interest. A bit of tannin tenacity adds to the buffed and welcoming texture. This wine really infuses the palate with charm. A pinotgasm.

Reviewed August 29, 2020. 97

2018 Adelaida HMR Estate Vineyard Adelaida District Paso Robles Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., \$60.

Moderate garnet color in the glass. Fetching aromas of black cherry and earthy flora lead off. The mid-weight flavors of black cherry and boysenberry are striking and exhibit exceptional length in the mouth and on the finish. Hints of pastry crust, vanilla and baking spice add interest. A sophisticated wine that is driven by well-integrated, crunchy acidity. The finish seemingly lasts forever and leaves behind a memorable echo of dark fruited aromatic goodness. When tasted from an open bottle several hours later, my notes say simply,

"Wonderful!" Reviewed August 29, 2020. 96



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/350/.

Rosemary's Vineyard, Arroyo Grande Valley AVA

Owners: Brian Talley

Acres: 14 acres of Pinot Noir and 14 acres of Chardonnay

Years planted: 1987-2001. The original 2.5-acre planting of Pinot Noir is own-rooted Wädenswil clone and still in production. Much of the original Chardonnay planting has now been replanted with Pinot Noir.

Location: Arroyo Grande in the Arroyo Grande Valley AVA

Aspect: One of the coolest sites in the Arroyo Grande Valley AVA, overlooking the Pacific Ocean that lies 6.5 miles to the southwest. The vineyard surrounds the home of Talley Vineyards' co-founder Rosemary Talley. The site was a former avocado grove that performed poorly due to frequent frosts that caused the crop to fall off the trees.

Pinot Noir scions: Wädenswil 2A (original vines) and Dijon clones

Soil: Lopez very shaly loam (chalky shale)

Vines: Original plantings are 6' x 12' spacing while later plantings have 4' x 8'. The vineyard is truly unique as a site that produces both Pinot Noir and Chardonnay of such high quality.

Farming: Sustainable farming practices by a full-time team. Yields are about 2 tons per acre.

Winery clients: Au Bon Climat and Testarossa. Talley Vineyards has produced a vineyard-designated Pinot Noir from Rosemary's Vineyard since 1993.

Comments: Numerous vintages of the iconic Rosemary's Vineyard Pinot Noir have been served at the White House. The vineyard is named after Brian Talley's mother, Rosemary. The first Pinot Noir to bear the 'Rosemary's Vineyard' moniker on the label was a 1991 legendary single vineyard bottling crafted by the late Jim Clendenen.

2018 Talley Vineyards Rosemary's Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir 13.9% alc., 575 cases, \$80. Moderate garnet color in the glass. Plenty of sweet Pinot perfume including aromas of cherry, baking spices,

and red rose petal. Moderately rich flavors of black cherry and blackberry framed by silky tannins and a compliment of oak. Lustrous and giving, with a grand finish. Still terrific when tasted two days later from a previously opened bottle. **95**

2019 Testarossa Rosemary's Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., 1,000 cases, \$74. Dark garnet color in the glass. Plenty to like in the nose that offers scents of black cherry, terra-cotta, underbrush and a hint of toasty oak. Toothsome flavors of dark cherry, black raspberry, and blackberry with a hint of savory herbs and welcome oak. Clearly special, with an appealing sappy richness framed by balanced tannins, and a sleek texture. This wine hits all the bass notes with its tangy dark fruits. Surprisingly giving at this young age. **95**



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/329/.

Solomon Hills Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley AVA

Owners: The companion vineyard to Bien Nacido Vineyard was planted by the Miller Family in 1999.

Acres: 100 acres of Pinot Noir plus some chardonnay and Syrah

Years planted: Late 1990s

Location: Just 8 miles west of Bien Nacido Vineyard but with a decidedly different terroir.

Aspect: The westernmost vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley, adjacent to Highway 101 and just 10 miles from the Pacific coastline. The south-facing site is blessed with the proximity to the ocean and the resulting Santa Maria marine effect. As a result, it is one of the coldest vineyards in the region and is very marginal for growing grapes. Spread on gently rolling hills with 10-15% slope.

Pinot Noir scions: Dijon 115, 667 and 777, and Wädenswil 2A

Soils: Primarily ocean-derived sandy loam (Garey Series) with rapid water drainage and moderate stress to the vines.

Farming: Managed by the same team that farms Bien Nacido Vineyard (headed by Chris Hammell). SIP certified organic farming practices.

Winery clients: A Solomon Hills Estate Pinot Noir is produced as a companion to the Bien Nacido Estate Pinot Noir. A little more than 1500 cases are produced annually off of selected rows of vines in the two vineyards. Clients, many of which have included Byron, Calera Wine Co, Dolin Malibu Estate Vineyards, Flying Goat Cellars, Foxen, J. Wilkes Wines, Kenneth Volk, Landmark Vineyards,

Lane Tanner, Paul Lato, Presqu'île Winery, Ryan Cochrane Wines, Row Eleven Wine Co, Tantara, The Ojai Vineyard, Tolosa Wines, and Vino V Wines.

Comments: In the late 1850s, the bandit Salomon Pico traversed El Camino Real and was the inspiration for the character Zorro. This vineyard was christened Solomon Hills. Paul Lato has said, "This vineyard has the potential to become the 'Grand Cru' of Santa Barbara County." The 900-plus-acres adjacent the vineyard owned by The Miller Family Wine Company are leased to various private enterprises including Driscoll, which is known for blueberries.

2016 Paul Lato "Suerte" Solomon Hills Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., \$80. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose is both fruity and savory, combining aromas of black raspberry and spiced black plum with aromas of dried herbs and tobacco. The savory theme continues on the palate that features mid weight purple and black berry fruits that are permeated with earthy and herbal flavors The wine has a very soothing texture and a fine, but not noteworthy finish. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Reviewed June 9, 2018. 92*

2018 Solomon Hills Estate Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.0% alc., 634 cases, \$60. Pommard and Dijon 115 and 667 clones. 30% whole cluster. Native primary and malolactic fermentations. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Giving aromas of dark cherry and raspberry, earthy flora, dark spices and dried herbs. The flavors echo the aromas with added flavors of white pepper and Italian herbs. There is good lift from bright acidity and appealing length on the palate and on the finish. 93*



More reviews: www.princeofpinot.com/vineyard/137/.

Exceptionally High-Scoring Wines in This Issue

98

2017 Pisoni Pisoni Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

97

2012 Rhys Alpine Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir

2017 Adelaida HMR Estate Vineyard Adelaida District Paso Robles Pinot Noir

**2017 Mount Eden Vineyards Estate The Tanaka Project Santa Cruz Mountains
Pinot Noir**

96

2017 Clarice Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

2017 Morgan Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

2018 Adelaida HMR Estate Vineyard Adelaida District Paso Robles Pinot Noir

2018 Pisoni Pisoni Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

95

2017 Calera Jensen Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir

2017 Sea Smoke Southing Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir

2018 Ancien Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir

2018 Calera Jensen Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir

2018 Clarice Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

2018 Morgan Double L Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir

2018 Rhys Horseshoe Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir

**2018 Sanford Founders' Vines Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot
Noir**

2018 Talley Vineyards Rosemary's Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir

2019 Testarossa Rosemary's Vineyard Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir

94

- 2006 Rhys Alpine Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir**
- 2011 ROAR Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir**
- 2014 Pisoni Pisoni Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir**
- 2016 Big Basin Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir**
- 2016 Pisoni Pisoni Estate Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir**
- 2017 Loring Clos Pepe Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir**
- 2017 Morgan Double L Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir**
- 2017 Sea Smoke Ten Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir**
- 2017 Sonnet Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir**
- 2018 Lester Domingo Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir**
- 2018 Sea Smoke Southing Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir**
- 2018 Sea Smoke Ten Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir**
- 2018 Waxwing Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir**
- 2018 The Ojai Vineyard Fe Ciega Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir**
- 2019 Paul Lato “Lancelot” Pisoni Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir**
- 2019 Testarossa Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir**

My Week With Jim Clendenen

Zack Eidson

“When the history books are written documenting the history of California winemaking, Jim Clendenen should have a major chapter dedicated to his legacy.”

It is rare that I include a feature in the *PinotFile* written by other contributors. This timely tale of personal experience with Jim Clendenen seemed highly appropriate given his recent passing and the several special vineyards featured in this issue that were sources of Jim’s wines.

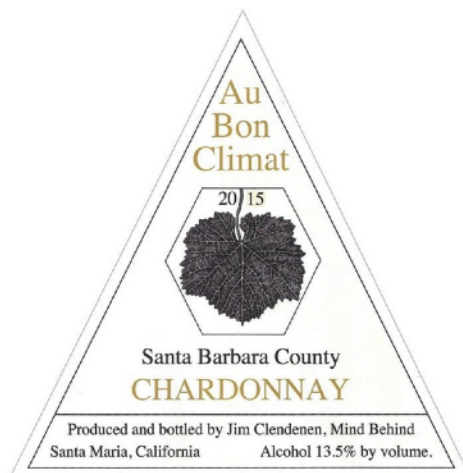
Zack Eidson is the general manager of **MetroWines** in Asheville, North Carolina. He entered a contest a few years ago to win a week at harvest with Jim and won. This was such a special experience he wanted to share it with my readers. I was honored that he chose the *PinotFile*.

Zack has been often reminiscing about the time he spent with Jim in September 2012. The harvest was one of the most abundant in recent years and extra hands on deck were welcomed and appreciated. It also turned out to be one of the memorable weeks of Zack’s life. Here is his experience in his own words.

Part 1

The wine world has lost a true legend. Jim Clendenen, a pioneer in his industry is gone but he will never be forgotten because he has left a tasting impression on generations of winemakers and wine professionals. In the international wine industry, being “old school” is considered hip in Italy, France, and Greece, yet being old school in California is considered passé. This may have to do with how young the California wine scene is in comparison to some countries whose wine history dates back to 6,000 BC. Jim was considered old school and wore that badge proudly. I considered his philosophies timeless. He championed the notion of enjoying a glass of wine with lunch without getting drunk. During his career, he focused on making lower alcohol wines that were balanced and were a better accompaniment with food. Food and wine were his passion in life and this evident to me within 5 minutes of our meeting.

In the 39 years of making Au Bon Climat wines, Jim never changed his wine labels. I thought that they reflected his personal uniqueness. Many considered these labels old school and dated. But I considered them timeless.



Chapter 1: The Contest

I worked for a wine distributor in Cincinnati, Ohio, that sold Au Bon Climat and Clendenen Family Vineyard wines throughout the state of Ohio. Jim agreed to host one of my company’s sales representatives. I was

relatively inexperienced as a sales representative so I assumed that a sales competition to win a trip to Santa Maria, California, would not be in the cards.

When it was announced that the contest would be based on an essay to Jim answering the question, “Why should I choose you?” I wrote an essay that expressed a passionate plea, yet was humble, heartfelt, and honest. I accompanied my essay with a video that showed testimonials from my customers. I believe I was the only one that did the essay and testimonial video production.

Chapter 2: The Ranch

In late September 2012, I packed my bags and flew to Los Angeles. I rented a car and drove north along beautiful Highway 101. My first stop was at Bien Nacido Vineyard where Jim’s winery and compound were located. I was directed to Jim’s ranch where my quarters would be during my stint working harvest at Au Bon Climat. I was immediately taken by the views and the amazing guest house Jim had constructed. I still remember the scent of leather and wood that reminded me of cabins I stayed in as a kid in the mountains of Colorado.



I spent the week in my new home drinking with new friends, resting my aching body from working the crush, cooking vegetables from the garden, staying up too late playing the drums and listening to techno music with a budding winemaker Frenchman, while making wine in a closet and meeting a future business mentor.

Part 2

Chapter 3: Harvest

On the first day working harvest, I awoke early to the sound of cannon fire. Surrounded by vineyards, I quickly realized that this was the winegrowers’ way of keeping birds away. Evidently, waxwings really enjoy their Chardonnay.

I arrived at the winery early in the morning and was immediately put to work doing punch-downs and pump-overs on red wine. Jim wanted punch-downs twice a day, once in the morning and once before everyone left for the day. This process happened every day during fermentation which lasted 14 days. I quickly learned to look for the open-top tanks closer to the end of fermentation because they were easier to punch down.

A pump-over was done towards the beginning and the end of fermentation. The juice was pumped from under the cap to the top of the cap to stir it up. I loved this part of my job because I could sit and enjoy the views while I was working hard stirring hundreds of gallons of wine. I used a large PVC pipe with slits cut in it to allow the

wine into the pipe but not the skins. The juice in the pipe was pumped through a gas-powered pump and out the hose on top of the cap (see photo below).



I also worked on the de-stemmer, the first location that red wine grapes are dropped off after harvest in the vineyards. After the stems were removed from the grapes, the juice was pumped into tanks to start the fermentation. Human interaction was necessary to manage the stems the machine was spitting out and to regulate the pump to keep the flow going.

It did not take long for me to ask, “When do we stomp the grapes?” This process at Au Bon Climat is mainly used to fit as many grapes as possible into the large industrial press.

During all the excitement, Jim was always at the stove prepping lunch for the staff. He would cook every day for about twenty people. His meals were fantastic and the wine he opened to accompany the food was unbelievable. Jim would pull about ten bottles from the winery’s cellar and the wines were passed around for the 1-2 hour lunch break.



An interesting part of working harvest was checking grape ripeness levels in order to determine the optimum time to pick. That decision was primarily determined in the lab, but I went out with Jim and together we randomly selected clusters as we walked down the vineyard rows. We picked a bucket full of clusters and took them back to the lab. I crushed the grapes in the bucket and then the enologist checked the acidity levels as well as Brix (sugar) levels.

Working harvest was an eye-opening experience. Although it was very labor-intensive, it was rewarding. At one point I joked to Jim that his contest was a fraud and he developed the contest only to obtain free labor. He laughed and said, "This is an education son," and then turned to me and remarked, "Time to clean the tanks."

Chapter 4: The Frenchman and the Budding Winemaker

At the end of each day, I was exhausted. Everything hurt. Finished wine is elegant and glamorous, but the amount of effort and labor put into its production is far from it. I should have gone back to my quarters at the ranch and rested each night to recharge for the following day, but for fear of missing out I partied with the Frenchman and the budding winemaker every night. These two gentlemen, Theo and Marc, were staying at the guest house at the ranch and were interning at Au Bon Climat. The Frenchman's father was a winemaker in Macon, France, while Marc was a California surfer dude learning to make wine with a legend. To my knowledge, Marc never left the compound at Au Bon Climat and now makes his wine under the Piro label.

Every night before leaving, Jim let us pick wines from the winery's cellar. It did not matter if the wines were 15, 20 or 30 years old. These were some of the best wines that I had ever tasted. We scrounged for food in the evenings, played the drum set at the ranch, and lasted to about midnight before heading off to bed. I found out that midnight is when the French start blasting techno music before winding down an hour later.

At the end of my trip, both Theo and Marc felt like brothers. I spent every minute with them except for part of the week when I stayed at Jim's house and hung with him for a few days. Theo Merlin is pictured below.



Part 3

Chapter 5: Divine Intervention

Prior to my trip, I was at a crossroads in my life. Happily married, I was on a mission to pursue a wine career. Back home in Cincinnati, I was peddling wines to wine shops and restaurants with a burning desire to open my own wine shop. I was on the fence because I liked the sales job I had because it allowed me to take trips to California and meet industry leaders.

One day during my week, I was awarded a day of rest one and I decided to spend the time at Jim's ranch. I wanted to take advantage of the amazing views (see photo below) and take advantage of the garden, so I made myself at home. I found some dry pasta, picked some tomatoes and basil, and made one of the best pasta dishes I had ever eaten. I had never experienced fresh California tomatoes before. While I was enjoying the pasta, a random guy walked into the ranch.



I was somewhat alarmed but soon learned the guy, whose name was John, was a wine store proprietor from Vancouver, Washington, dropping in to say hello to Jim who was an old friend. Shortly after we met, I received a phone call from Jim telling me I would have a roommate for the night.

That night, John and I chatted for a while, and I picked his brain about opening a wine store. His insight, experience, and motivation are ultimately what led me to take the leap and open a wine store of my own. That day and chance meeting felt like divine intervention. My mind was made up and I knew what I wanted to do.

Within a few months of my return from California, I quit my job, moonlighted as a bartender, and prepped and curated my own wine shop during the day. The shop ultimately opened in March 2013. Years later, I would still reach out frequently to John, asking for advice about running a retail wine store.

Chapter 6: Brumbies at the Guest House

One day while working harvest, Jim said, “Grab your stuff, you are coming home with me.” Jim’s home was about a 20-minute drive from the winery and separate from the guest ranch. At this time, I had no idea what he had planned. He showed me the guest house near his pool and hot tub area. When I went to take a shower, I found spider webs galore. It seemed like no one had stayed there for years. There wasn’t any toilet paper,

soap, or towels. I had not come prepared since he plucked me from harvest at the winery earlier. I went ahead and showered to freshen up.

I met Jim in his house for a glass of wine and some cheese. When he went to the stove to begin cooking, I snuck into the bathroom to steal some toilet paper and soap. His clothes were splayed all over the bathroom. This legend was a human, after all, living the life of a bachelor. I sat down to eat one of the best meals of my life. Jim cooked me a 5-course meal with wine pairings for each course. I felt very special, and thoroughly enjoyed my chat with him late into the night. At the end of the meal, he said, “Well, I am headed to the hot tub and you are welcome to join me.” I declined and went off to bed in the bare guest house.

In the middle of the night, I was awakened to a sound like a horse snorting outside the window. Soon it sounded like multiple wild animals walking around in the gravel driveway next to the guest house and soon the sounds

led to the roof. I was both disturbed and scared. I laid there for what seemed like hours to what seemed to be a gathering of brumbies (wild horses) outside my window. When I woke up at dawn, I went outside but found no sign of animal tracks. It all seemed so bizarre. I was embarrassed to tell Jim, so I asked a few questions about the wildlife in the area and he assured me that there were not any wild horses running around. I said, "Jim, I think your guest house is haunted." He remarked with a laugh, "You are not the first to say that."

Chapter 7: The Dinner

We headed off to downtown Santa Barbara and went straight to the farmer's market. He collected some vegetables and many other supplies that seemed destined for a large meal. After returning to his car, he said, "Want to taste the best tacos you will ever have in your life?" We drove a few blocks until we came to a long line at a small corner restaurant named La Super-Rica Tacqueria. We grabbed a few Bohemia beers and stuffed our faces with fresh tacos. Jim told me that this was one of Julia Child's favorite restaurants. He said he had brought many famous people to this very spot, including Mario Batali and Emeril Lagasse. I lifted my Bohemia to cheer him and he shouted, "And Zach Eidson."

At lunch, Jim asked me if I would be a guest sommelier for a charity dinner he was hosting that evening that was \$1,000 a plate. Of course, I agreed. The dinner was prepared by Jim and Frank Ostini of the Hitching Post restaurant. Over ten bottles of magnums and double magnums were opened. Oh yeah, Gary Pisoni and Christina Aguilera were on the guest list. Apparently, Aguilera is a big fan of Jim's wines. The photo below, L to R, Jim, Zack, and Frank.



Once all of the guests had arrived, I saw several familiar faces except Christina. Jim said her son was ill and wasn't able to attend. To this day, I don't know if Jim was being honest or pulling on his pranks on me. Almost every one of the 30+ guests brought a magnum or double magnum of wine. Jim brought some magnums out of his cellar. As the night wore on, Jim proved to be an adept host, telling jokes and stories late into the evening. This was a night I will never forget and I wasn't even on the guest list.



Chapter 8: Postscript

Years later, I heard that when Jim spoke of me, he would say, “Oh yeah, great kid, very humble.”

Many consider Jim the godfather of Santa Barbara wines. He was a mentor to numerous winemakers. The noted critic, Robert Parker, Jr., named Au Bon Climat one of the top ten wineries in the world in the 1990s. Yes, I was humble. Most people are humble in the presence of such brilliance. Not knowing what lies ahead for Au Bon Climat, I am going to cherish every sip of Au Bon Climat wine I can get my hands on as I reminisce about one of the best weeks of my career. Thank you for the memories, Jim. You will forever be “The Mind Behind.”

Zack Eidson’s Metro Wines has been voted the #1 wine shop in Asheville for seven straight years and has been mentioned in both the *Wall Street Journal* and *Wine Enthusiast*. Visit www.metrowinesasheville.com.

Many are left with memorable experiences with Jim Clendenen and his wines, I leave you with this parting appropriate photo.



Wine Briefs

Rick Longoria Ends Career as Winery Owner I have had the pleasure of reviewing Rick's Pinot Noir wines over the years and was never disappointed. He announced recently that he is selling his winery, tasting room in Lompoc, equipment, and inventory for almost \$2 million. He has already sold his Fe Ciega Vineyard to The Ojai Vineyard. Rick founded Longoria Winery in 1982.

Tim Matz New Director of Wine Education at Linfield University Tim Matz has been named Domaine Serene Chair in Wine Business and Director of the Evenstad Center for Wine Education at Linfield University. Matz has had more than three decades in the wine business internationally including executive leadership. Linfield has the only comprehensive wine program outside of the three programs located in California, and is the first university in the country to offer an interdisciplinary liberal arts degree in wine studies. The university also offers wine management and wine marketing certificates online, provides a summer wine industry immersion program, and hosts the annual International Pinot Noir Celebration each summer.

The Latest Wine & Health News A report out of [metro.co.uk](https://www.metro.co.uk) suggested that drinking a glass of red wine in moderation can help prevent high blood pressure. Scientists assessed the effect of a flavonoid-rich diet on blood pressure by monitoring more than 900 adults in Germany. Three glasses of red wine per week seemed optimum for achieving the desired result on blood pressure, while 80 grams of berries a day was also found to be beneficial.

In August, [thedrinksbusiness.com](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com) reported a study by pharmacist Jacqueline Iversen who found that agonizing hangover symptoms are due primarily to inflammation rather than dehydration. She believes that the symptoms of alcohol hangovers can be prevented by disrupting the body's inflammatory response with a combination of a non-steroid anti-inflammatory drug and an antihistamine. In her study in volunteers, this new treatment, named SPJ-001 by developer Sen-Jam Pharmaceutical, is safe and efficacious. However, dehydration most certainly plays a role in hangover symptoms and rehydration treatment is still considered advisable.

In September, [thedrinksbusiness.com](https://www.thedrinksbusiness.com) reported a UK study that claims the consumption of alcohol-free wine has the same heart health benefits as drinking a moderate amount of the real thing. The research involved nearly 450,000 people as part of the UK Biobank project. The participants' lifestyle choices and health were tracked over seven years. Participants who drank a moderate amount of wine had a 40% reduced risk of coronary heart disease compared to the group average. But, moderate consumption of beer, cider, or spirits increased the risk by 10%. The researchers believe that the benefits of red wine are due to polyphenols rather than alcohol.

There have been multiple studies reported over the past few years on the relationship between alcohol and atrial fibrillation (AFib). Some research indicates an increased risk of AFib with even moderate amounts of wine drinking, while other research shows no significant relationship. Scientists believe the specific relationship between drinking alcohol and AFib is difficult to determine because alcohol is so commonly consumed. As reported in www.studyfinds.org, Dr. Gregory Marcus, a professor of medicine in the Division of Cardiology at UC San Francisco found that even one alcoholic drink may be enough to increase the risk of AFib. He studied 100 patients with intermittent (paroxysmal) AFib who consumed at least one drink per month and typically consumed one drink each day on average during the study period. At 1 month, researchers compared the number of AFib events and whether or not the episodes were preceded by alcohol use. Of the 56 participants in the study who had an episode of AFib, it was twice as likely that they had had alcohol in the four hours before the episode. The more alcohol a participant drank, the greater the risk of quickly experiencing AFib. The authors of the study point out that confounding that may accompany alcohol consumption could not be excluded, and the findings may not apply to the general population. This peer-reviewed study was published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

The [jamanetwork.com](https://www.jamanetwork.com) reported a cohort study of 11,737,467 participants to determine whether the frequency of drinking alcohol or the quantity of alcohol consumed per occasion was the most important risk factor for developing gastrointestinal (GI) cancer. This study suggests that frequent drinking may be a more important risk factor for GI cancers than the amount of alcohol consumed per occasion. There is very little information on

the mechanism by which the frequency of drinking is an important determinant of cancer risk. It should be noted that this study was done on Koreans and results may not apply the results to other ethnic groups.

The Woes of COVID and 2020 Wildfires on Oregon Wine Industry On September 8, 2021, the Oregon Wine Board released its 2020 Vineyard and Winery Report. The estimated value of wine grape production decreased 34% or by nearly \$80 million to about \$159 million in 2020. Yield per acre decreased by 24% due to cooler late spring weather reducing cluster sizes and weights. Total grape production was down 29% as yields and wildfires resulted in 30,000 fewer tons harvested than the prior year. Pinot Noir production plummeted statewide except in the Rogue Valley and the Columbia River regions. **Pinot Noir production in the Willamette Valley fell over 41% in 2020.** COVID led to labor shortages as workers either became ill or avoided working altogether, tasting rooms were shuttered for extended periods and there were increased costs to wineries of investing in health and safety measures. There were some bright spots in the report as well. There are now 995 wineries in the state, an increase of 10% over 2019. The number of vineyards increased from 1,297 in 2019 to 1,370 in 2020. Total planted acreage increased by 6% to 39,531. Pinot Noir remained Oregon's leading variety, accounting for 59% of planted acreage and 49% of wine grape production. Oregon wine sales to national distributors increased by 3.5%. International sales increased by 24%. Oregon's direct-to-consumer shipments increased 31%. The complete report is available at industry.oregonwine.org. My advice is to stock up on the outstanding Pinot Noir wines from Oregon's 2018 and 2019 vintages as Oregon's heat dome in 2021 will also most certainly limit production.

Syndicate Wine, LLC Pairs with Comic Book Publisher Syndicate announced that five custom Oregon wines will be released with labels featuring exclusive artwork of Oregon comic book publisher TidalWave Productions. The first four wines were offered to the general public on September 9, 2021. at Syndicate Wine Bar in Beaverton, and include a 2019 Willamette Valley Chardonnay, a 2020 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris, a 2017 Walla Walla Valley Syrah and a 2020 Willamette Valley Pinot Noir Rosé. Tidal Wave publisher Darren G. Davis is excited to bring his two favorite hobbies together and help another Oregon-based company during these challenging times. Founded in 2019, Syndicate Wine, LLC is an Oregon Benefit Company with an established wine bar and retail space in Beaverton and a new location in Newberg in 2021. The company supports the wine industry through a holistic approach to community, supporting small and craft producers through private label partnerships, providing an inclusive work environment and dining space, and encouraging education and appreciation of wine culture for all. For more information, visit www.tidalwavecomics.com or email sales@syndicatewines.com.



Hispanic Heritage Month Oregon's Hispanic wineries unite for the second annual "Celebrating Hispanic Roots" event in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15-October 15, 2021. Six wineries with Hispanic owners and winemakers will unite to celebrate their common Hispanic roots, the unique journeys that brought them to Oregon, the vineyards they manage, the premier wines they produce, and their ambitions to give back to the Spanish-speaking community in Oregon. The months will conclude with an in-person wine tasting event to be held at Beacon Hill Winery & vineyard on Sunday, October 3. The tasting will benefit local nonprofit, Adelante Mujeres. Wine packages that commemorate the event will also be available exclusively from September 15-October 15. The six participating wineries are Alumbra Cellars, Atticus Wine, Beacon Hill Winery & Vineyard, Cramoisi Vineyard, PARRA Wine Co., and Valcan Cellars. Visit the individual winery websites to view the special wine packages available. Visit www.celebratinghispanicroots.com for updates and information.

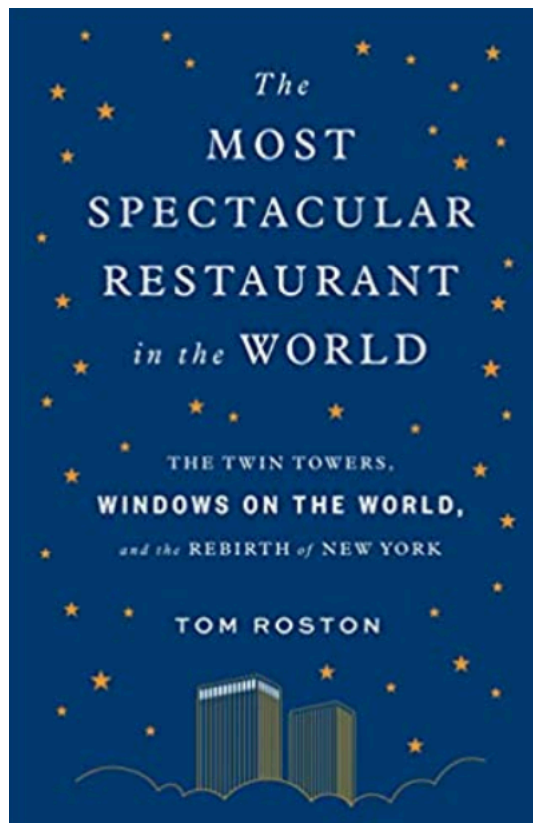


Red Wine is NOT a Fattening Beverage I always thought it was humorous that producers promoted low-alcohol wine as low-calorie drinks that would not cause weight gain. This approach was particularly appealing to women. Science has shown that although calories in wine come from alcohol, red wines are an excellent source of polyphenols that counteract the calories by burning them. Lamuela-Raventos reported her research to the *Wine Spectator* that indicated wine can help burn extra calories. The results of the PREDIMEI trial disproved the notion that wine has empty calories. She points out that when we drink red wine in moderation with meals, one is not adding more weight or abdominal fat. Polyphenols appear to be responsible for this weight-control action. Since red wine is the key, why would you drink anything else than Pinot Noir since it has among the highest levels of polyphenols of all red grapes? One glass of white wine has only 40 mg of polyphenols compared to one glass of red wine which has 200 mg, primarily due to the anthocyanins present in the skin of red grapes.

WesMar Winery's Last Vintage Denise Selyem and Kirk Hubbard have spent 33 years together and 22 years operating WesMar ("Wesmare") Winery. The 2019 vintage wines currently on release will be the 20th and last vintage. They have sold their home and vineyard in Sebastopol and the new owners plan to continue to develop and improve the property. Denise and Kirk plan to devote their future time to sailing and no longer have a winery. They had toiled as garagistes in a 1,500-foot space in Sebastopol. I have been on board with the excellent WesMar Pinot Noir wines since 2002 and I have reviewed most of their releases up until the 2016 vintage. With the closure of Brogan Cellars and now WesMar Winery, the only vestige of the original Williams Selyem winery is Woodenhead Vintners, whose owner and winemaker Nikolai Stez spent considerable time working side-by-side with Burt Williams and continues to ply his trade, vinifying Pinot Noir in the traditional Williams Selyem way. Like Williams Selyem, WesMar never changed their label. Visit www.wesmarwinery.com to order the last 2019 vintage Pinot Noir wines. 2019 vintage magnums and library 3-liter bottles are available.



9/11 and Windows on the World As the nation commemorates the twentieth anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center, I would highly recommend the book, *“The Most Spectacular Restaurant in the World: The Twin Towers, Windows on the World and the Rebirth of New York.”* Journalist Tom Roston tells the complete story of the Windows on the World restaurant from its opening to 9/11 and its tragic end. Published in 2019 with illustrations, this well-researched book reveals the story of an iconic restaurant whose history had not been told now. Even more enjoyable with a glass of Pinot.



Bill Fuller Crafts 46th Vintage in Oregon The 2019 Willamette Valley Vineyards Tualatin Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir and Chardonnay represents Bill Fuller’s 46th vintage in Oregon. The wines are crafted by 84-year-old Bill from his favorite blocks at Tualatin Estate Vineyard using his traditional techniques and reflecting the inherent quality of the vineyard he founded in 1973. Like many Oregon wine pioneers, he moved from California in 1973 to plant the Tualatin Vineyard and become one of Oregon’s original winemakers. Bill had already worked in the lab at Italian Swiss Colony, obtained an MS in enology at UC Davis, and had been the winemaker at Louis Martini Winery for nine years when he began evaluating vineyard sites for an investment banker in Oregon. They became partners in a 65-acre site northwest of Forest Grove in 1972, which they named Tualatin Vineyards after the Tualatin River that flows near Forest Grove on its way to

the confluence with the Willamette River. In 1997, Willamette Valley Vineyards merged with Tualatin Estate Vineyard and Bill retired. Sixteen years later, Winery Director Christine Clair asked if Bill would come out of retirement and assist in the crafting of the wines produced from Tualatin Estate fruit. Watch David Adelsheim's full-length interview through the Oregon Wine History Archive at www.oregonwinehistoryarchive.org. The 2019 vintage Tualatin Estate Pinot Noir (\$60) may be purchased at www.wvv.com.





The Ten Commandments of Pinot Devotees

Through the years, I am sure readers have learned more about me personally. Maybe you don't know that I have been enthralled with Corvettes since the late 1950s while in high school. I bought my first one (and my first car), a brand new red 1969 Stingray, 427 cu/390 hp, upon graduating from medical school and have owned a Corvette continuously ever since. It is not an ideal car for wine country visits, so often I have had to rent a car for travel especially in winter.

Another of my passions is the 1950s and 1960s rock and roll and in particular doo-wop music. I have owned several jukeboxes through the years and possess an extensive collection of well-preserved vinyl LPs from that era. With that in mind, I offer "The Ten Commandments of Pinot Devotees." My apologies to Harvey (Fuqua) and the Moonglows who first sang "The Ten Commandments of Love" in the 1950s.

*Thou shalt never love another
Stand by Pinot Noir all the while
Take happiness with the heartaches
Go through your cellar wearing a smile.
Thou shall always honor Pinot Noir for everything it gives and does
Love it with all your heart and soul
Come to Pinot Noir when you are lonely
Savor it when the time is right
Treat it sweet and gentle
And always know that Pinot Noir is right*